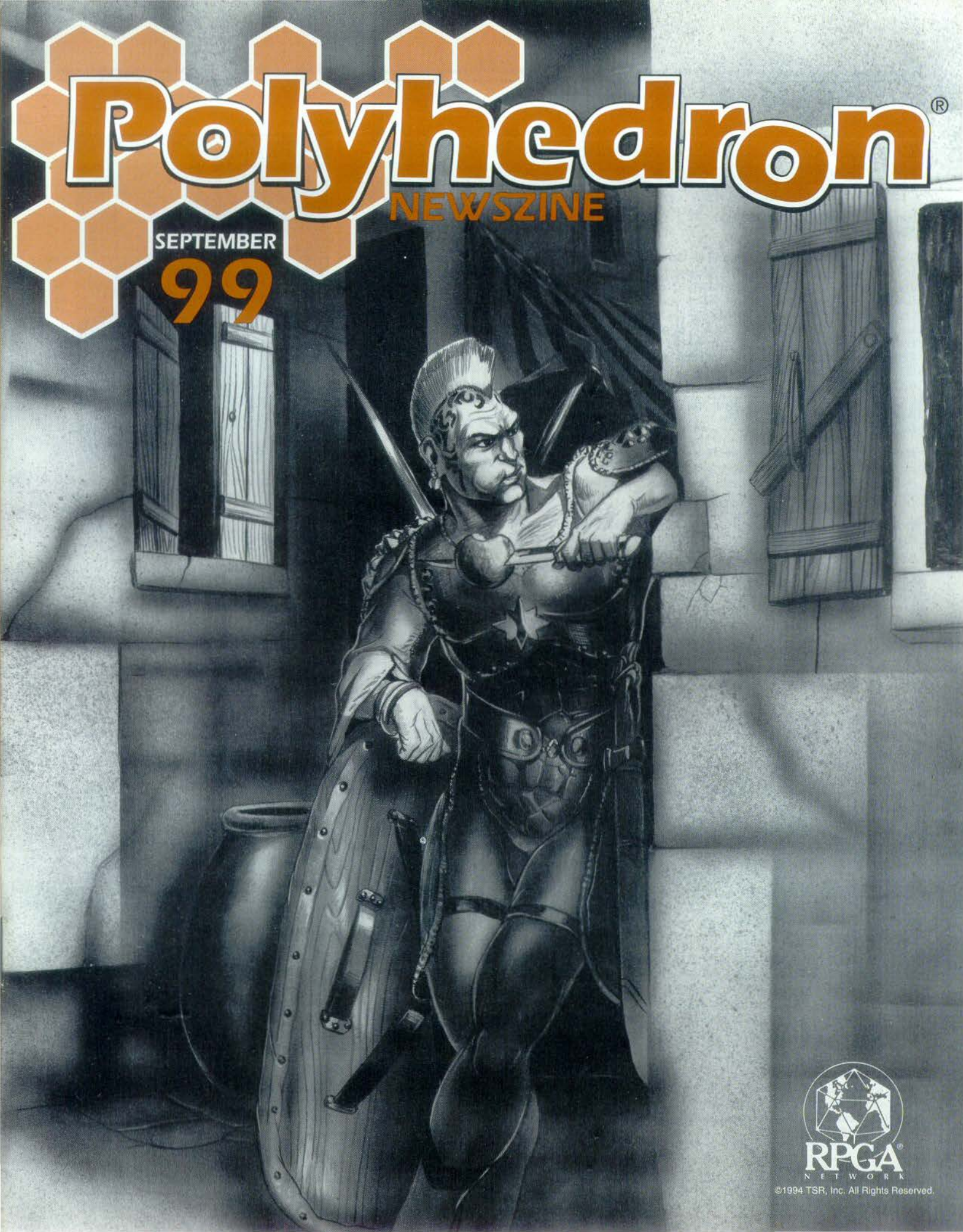
Polyhedron®

NEWSZINE

SEPTEMBER

99



RPGA NETWORK

©1994 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Conventions

Shorecon '94, September 9-11
Eatontown, NJ

This event will be held at the Sheraton Eatontown Hotel. Guests include Jeff Menges and Jim Hlavaty. Activities include role-playing, LARP, board, miniatures, and war games. Other activities include demos, dealers, anime, seminars, auction, and a dance. Registration: $15/weekend preregistered, or $20/weekend at the door. Write to: Shorecon '94, 142 South St., Unit 9C, Red Bank, NJ 07701-2216.

AndCon '94, September 15-18
Independence, OH

AndCon is now a four-day convention featuring huge *Magic: The Gathering* tournaments (with WotC staff on hand) and first-run RPGA® Network events, including six Living City events, Masters, Grandmasters, and Paragon events, plus one of the largest Living City Interactive events anywhere! Darwin and Peter Bromley of Mayfair Games, Inc. will be on hand to run Puffing Billy Tournaments. Bill Fields of GSI is our Play-By-Mail Guest of Honor. Pre-reg weekend badge price is $19.95. Write to Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 3100, Kent, OH 44240, or call 800-529-EXPO (USA) or 216-673-2117 (Ohio & International).

Romacon '94, Settembre 16-18
Roma, Italia

Le Associzioni I Signori Del Gioco, la Legio II Augusta, ed i The Dungeoneers, in collaborazione con l'Associazioni Villa Carpegna e La Compagnia Dell'Anello, organizzano come primo atto aggregativo della nascente Federgiochi, la dodicesima edizione della Convention Nazionale dei Giocatori di Simulazion e Ruolo a Roma presso l'Hotel Ergife, situato in Via Aurelia 671/619. Per qualsiasi informazione potete rivolgervi al nostro Servizio Informazioni innanzitutto telefonando ai number: Centro-Sud: 06/86894486 o 06/44238135, Nord: 02/58106085.

Americon, September 17-18
Clayton/Franklinville, NJ

This con features the AD&D® game, *Vampire, Cyberpunk, RIFTS, GURPS, Car Wars, Mutazoids, Werewolf, Mummy, Mage, Kult, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, BattleTech,* RAVENLOFT® setting, AD&D Trivia game, and more. Special game sessions include an AD&D game charity event in honor of Craig Jarrel, with proceeds to the Children's Hospital, arena combat battles. Door fee $12 with a $1 discount for Network members. Write: Americon, c/o Carl "Thunder," P.O. Box 125, Mullica Hill, New Jersey, 08062. Or call: (609) 589-0556.

Fields of Honor III, September 23-25
Urbandale, IA

Held at the Howard Johnson Hotel and Convention Center at 4800 Merle Bay Road, this con features role-playing, miniatures, board games, live action, and Network sanctioned games. Registration is $10 for the weekend. For more information, contact: Fields of Honor, c/o Comics+, 6501 Douglas Avenue, Urbandale, IA 50322.

FoxCon '94, September 23-25
Elgin, IL

FoxCon will feature RPGA Network events run by MGM Grand, a *BattleTech* "Iron Warrior,"and a silent auction. Other events include fantasy, SF, and historical miniatures. Japanese animation will be shown free in the auditorium. The con will be held at the Larsen Middle School at 665 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL. For more information, send a SASE to: FoxCon, 636 Center Street, Elgin, IL 60120.

Kennel Con, September 24-25
Waikiki, HI

This convention will be held at the Fort DeRussy USO, minutes away from beautiful Waikiki Beach. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include the Arena, Japanese animation, and a few surprises. Registration: $3 plus small event fees. Write to: Kennel Con c/o Eric Kline, P.O. Box 90182, Honolulu, HI 96835-0182, or call Eric at (808) 623-3909.

Dire Consequences II, September 30-October 2
Plainville, CT

This con will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Plainville, and events will include first-run RPGA Network events including three new Living City events, one of which will be a live-action game. Other activities include board games, a Living City auction, and open gaming. Pre-registration is $15, $2 per game. Write to: Dire Consequences II, P.O. Box 251, Bristol, CT 06011-0251.

Hexacon '94, October 7-9
Greensboro, NC

Join us at the Greensboro Holiday Inn Airport for our 10th anniversary! Network events include AD&D Feature, Masters, Grand Masters, Living City, *Shadowrun*, and *Paranoia*. There will be a dealer's room, miniature's contest, prizes, Twister-Thon 2, Clay-O-Rama, charity fund-raiser auctions, and other RPGs. Pre-reg is $15 before October 1st. For information, write: Hexacon 94, c/o Sherrie Miller, Box 4, EUC, UNC-G, Greensboro, NC 27403.

ConTact 12, October 14-16
Evansville, IN

This science fiction convention will be held at the Ramada Inn, Highway 41N in Evansville. The theme is "Sci-Fi Blue and Grey." Registration is $22, but the special "Conscription Deal" includes membership, a banquet ticket, and a limited-edition T-shirt by Ray VanTilburg for $35. For more information, write: ConTact 12, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville, IN 47737. Or call: (812) 425-2715.

Totally Tubular Con II, October 14-16
Fullerton, CA

The Awesome Gamers Yacht Club invites you to Southern California's premiere role-playing con. A three-round, round-robin AD&D game tournament and Living City events will be featured. Cost is only $20, but membership will be limited, so pre-register early! Write: Totally Tubular Con, P.O. Box 18791, Anaheim Hills, CA 92817-18791.

Sibcon '94, October 15
Zelienople, PA

The Circle of Swords Gaming Guild is sponsoring a con at the Lutheran Youth & Family Services. Scheduled events are RPGA Network tournaments including Living City, Decathlon, and Benefit tournaments, board games, miniature events, free-form role-playing events, and other role-playing events. We will also have a dealers' area and new game demonstrations. Registration is $5 until September 30 and $7 at the door. For details, send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003, or call Dave Schnur at (412) 283-1159.

Bay Games, October 21-23
College Park, MD

Presented by Atlanticon, Bay Games hosts a variety of historical & fantasy miniature games, popular board games, and role-playing games, including RPGA Network events. The con will be held at the College Park Holiday Inn. Pre-registration is $20/weekend or $15/day at the door. For attendance, dealer, and event info, write: Bay Games '94, P.O. Box 91, Beltsville, MD 20704-0091.

NukeCon IV, October 28-29
Omaha, NE

NukeCon features SFB, the 4th Mid-America *BattleTech* Tournament, a sanctioned Magic event, and many RPGs and board games. For info: NukeCon IV, c/o Stephanie Murphy, 13115 Josephine Circle, Omaha, NE 68138. Or call: 402-896-8564.

About the Cover
Network artist extraordinaire James Holloway shows us this back-alley scene from the DARK SUN® game setting.

Publisher
Rick Behling

Editor
Jean Rabe

Associate Editor
Dave Gross

Graphic Director
Larry Smith

Production Staff
Dave Conant
Kevin Melka

Subscriptions
Judy Mueller

If your mailing label reads "Exp 9.94" this is your last issue.

Renew today!

© 1994 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Polyhedron® NEWSZINE

Volume 14, Number 9
Issue #99, September 1994

SPECIAL FEATURE

12 **The Enemy of My Enemy—by Tom Prusa**
You learn who your friends are in this DARK SUN® setting adventure by one of the Network's premier tournament authors.

FEATURES

5 **Coin Collecting Under Athas's Hot Sun — by Carlo Anziano and Tina Brown**
From olive chips to gold obas, money on the world of Athas reflects the city-state in which it is made.

8 **New Gladiator Weapons — by Gregory Detwiler**
Expanding the arsenal of gladiators all over Athas, here is a selection of more exotic weaponry for the arena and beyond.

19 **Templars of the Tyr Region — by Tina Brown and Carlo Anziano**
Think the templars of your city are bad? Here are six more examples of why it's best to avoid these servants of the sorcerer-kings.

23 **Lightsabers and the Force — by Bill Slavicsek and Michele Carter**
The lightsaber is one of the most striking icons of the Star Wars universe. But how does the aspiring Jedi construct her own?

EDITORIAL

4 **Notes From HQ — by Dave Gross**
Another quote, another contest . . . but both are different this month.

DEPARTMENTS

27 **Weasel Games — by Lester W. Smith**
Kick Me—I'm a Weasel!

28 **Into The Dark — by James Lowder**
Our reviewer surveys the real reasons that William Shatner will always be remembered as Captain Kirk.

30 **The Living Galaxy — by Roger Moore**
Space colonies will present a new frontier in social dynamics as well as in surviving the often hostile environments on other planets.

Notes From HQ

**"The point of the journey
Is not to arrive"**

Folks are getting much quicker with the quotations! Our internet response winners from the issue #95 quotation are Colin Tan from Singapore, and John Dunn from Ohio. And through the U.S. mail we received two replies on the same day: one from David E. Smith of Illinois (again!), another from Jim McLaughlin from Idaho. Thanks to everyone who responded with the correct answer (Shakespeare's *As You Like It* this time). And if you're among those who feel the caprice of the U.S. Postal Service makes the contest unfair, see below for the fix to that problem. This month, the quotation is not from the Bard. Some have pointed out that anything appearing in a typical book of famous quotations is probably too easy. So this time . . . well, those who recognize the quotation will see it's from a very different source.

Why so many quotations? What makes them interesting to us? And what makes us use them as titles and chapter headings in our tournaments, modules, articles, books, and magazines? What's the attraction?

In college, one of my fellow students once blurted out angrily, "I don't understand what's so great about Shakespeare. This Hamlet is nothing but a bunch of clichés strung together!" We stared at her in shocked amazement. Someone started giggling, and the rest of us struggled to control our faces. Finally, the professor gently pointed out that these phrases weren't clichés when Shakespeare wrote them, that he wrote them first, and that they had become clichés only because so many later writers liked them enough to quote them. Many clichés are born when someone writes something that seems exactly right, captures an idea that inspires a lasting expression.

Another value of quotations is recognition. When you read, "raining cats and dogs," you not only get the idea at once, but you also will remember the line, having heard it often enough before. And often an author will take a cliché and turn it on its ear, as in "Reigning Cats and Dogs" for the title of a tournament in which rakasta and gnoll champions come into power. Cliches are especially susceptible to punsters (Living City players will know just what I mean).

And there's another recognition value: allusion. We all remember the word because our English teachers spent so much time explaining the difference between it and "illusion." But the more important difference is between allusion and plagiarism (which is really stealing). An allusion is a brief, unacknowledged reference to a previous, presumably remembered work. So if I title a tournament "Perchance To Dream," I'm hoping that everyone will recognize the phrase and perhaps even remember that it's from Hamlet (and maybe even remember that it's not sleep, but death, that the Prince is contemplating). And though I don't footnote the title to show that it's from Shakespeare, I'm not stealing it because I have a reasonable anticipation that you'll recognize the source. It comes back to recognition.

So why this month's quotation? What ideas does it inspire? This time it's up to you to decide, though I'll tell you a little of what it makes me think, too.

Role-playing, in its many genres, still falls pretty neatly into two categories: adventures and campaigns. Campaigns are, in some ways, a series of linked adventures with (one hopes) a greater, unifying purpose or story which leads to a final conclusion.

But adventures and campaigns each have their own virtues and flaws, and different players might prefer one to the other. The difference is like that between movies and television series—or perhaps more like the difference between short stories and huge epics. It's also the difference between a typical role-playing tournament and a campaign tournament (like those in the Living City or Virtual Seattle). But here I'd like to stop and hear from you rather than tell you more of what I think.

This month's competition is an essay contest. Your title is "The Point of the Journey," and then you choose whether it's to arrive or not to arrive. Which is better, in your opinion: adventuring or campaigning? And, of course, why? Weigh the benefits of each sort of role-playing, then write between 500 and 1,000 words on the subject, and send it to us by October 21, 1994. HQ staffers will each rate the entries from 1-10, then tack on a bonus point for anyone who can also identify this month's quotation. The top three entries will net groovy prizes, and any truly excellent essay may well appear in these pages for all to see.

Arrivederci,

POLYHEDRON® Newszine, (the official newsletter of TSR Inc.'s ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION™ Network) is published monthly by TSR, Inc. The mailing address for all correspondence is: PO Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Telephone (414)248-3625.

POLYHEDRON Newszine is mailed free to all RPGA® Network members. New membership rates for the U.S., Canada, and Mexico are $25, $20 for renewals.

Foreign rates are $45 per year (air mail). All prices are subject to change without notice. Changes of address for the delivery of membership materials must be received at least 30 days prior to the effective date of the change to ensure uninterrupted delivery.

POLYHEDRON Newszine welcomes unsolicited submissions of written material and artwork that are accompanied by our Standard Disclosure Form. No responsibility for such submissions can be assumed by the publisher in any event. No submission will be returned unless it is also accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope of sufficient size.

Unless special arrangements to the contrary are made prior to publication, materials submitted to the publisher for publication in POLYHEDRON Newszine are accepted solely upon the condition that the materials may be edited and published in POLYHEDRON Newszine or used in RPGA Network sanctioned tournaments, conventions and events. TSR and the RPGA Network shall make no other use of the materials unless TSR and the author or artist enter into a written agreement regarding such use.

TSR grants to prospective authors a non-exclusive right to use copyrighted materials of TSR in their submissions to TSR. An author, however, shall have no right to publish or permit someone other than TSR to publish a submission that includes any copyrighted materials of TSR without first obtaining the written permission of TSR to do so.

All letters addressed to the RPGA Network or to TSR, Inc. will be considered as submissions and may be printed in whole or in part at the discretion of the editor unless the sender specifically requests otherwise in writing.

Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed in POLYHEDRON Newszine are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of TSR, Inc., the RPGA Network, or its staff.

Standard Disclosure Forms, POLYHEDRON Writing Guidelines, Tournament Request Forms, Membership Forms, Club Forms, and Classified Ad Forms are available from Network HQ.

® designates registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.
™ designates trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

Most other product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

©1994 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Coin Collecting

Under Athas's Hot Sun

by Carlo Anziano and Tina Brown

Maruk walked through the open gates of the Caravan Way of Tyr, his weary eyes seeking out a money changer's shop. Spying the appropriate banner through the legs of a half-giant city guard, he threaded his way through the crowd, automatically checking his concealed pouch.

The oppressive heat lessened considerably as he entered the cool stone building. As Maruk approached the counter, a balding human in a blue tunic looked up from a thick ledger, laying aside the quill he had been using.

"Yes? how may I help you?"

Maruk glanced around to ensure that they were alone. "I'm just in from Gulg, and I need some local currency."

"Let's see what you have, then. I'll change anything except that damned Urikite stuff. Since the war, we've been flooded with it."

As Maruk spilled the contents of his pouch onto the counter, the human produced a set of finely crafted merchant scales. His eyebrows rose sharply as he saw the five coins resting on the counter.

"Three obas, five judaga, and a Balic Dictator. No wonder you need small change. There aren't many who could handle those, but this is just the place."

Checking the ledger and the weights of the five coins, the moneychanger began to count out Maruk's change.

"Taking into account my fee, you get one Tithian gold, 20 talents, 50 tenbits, and 50 bits."

"Maybe I'll need a bigger pouch," remarked Maruk dryly.

As you can see, individual city-states in the Tyr region have their own forms of currency and usually reject money that does not display the visage of their sorcerer-king or queen. This offers no problem for merchants who regularly ply the routes between each kingdom and accept all kinds of coinage, from gold tectuks to ceramic crescents. Still, for adventurers traveling between domains, it poses a barrier to buying goods or purchasing bed and board.

Almost all city-states, therefore, offer a moneychanging service to incoming visitors. These buildings are usually encountered near the entrances to the city and are heavily guarded. For their services, moneychangers charge a commission, which varies from city to city (see Table 1). A moneychanger's shop is easily picked out from the surrounding buildings due to the large purple banner flying overhead. Although all banners are the same color, the shape of the banner is different in each city-state and displays one of the cities' emblems:

Cities' Banners

Balic	**Large rectangular flag**	**Golden sun motif**
Draj	**Square banner**	**Silver feathered serpent**
Gulg	**Long pennant**	**Golden lizard (hegbo)**
Nibenay	**Forked pennant**	**Orange braxat**
Raam	**Large triangular flag**	**4-armed humanoid in silver**
Tyr	**Rectangular banner**	**Pile of gold coins**
Urik	**Forked pennant**	**Hamanu surrounded by flames**

Table 1: Moneychangers' Fees

Balic	**9-11%**
Draj	**6-8%**
Gulg	**9-11%**
Nibenay	**12-15%**
Raam	**6-8%**
Tyr	**9-11%**
Urik	**9-11%**

The fees in this table are average values, and it is possible some less scrupulous moneychangers could attempt to charge more if they think they can get away with it. These people are well-known to any self-respecting DM.

Each city-state has adopted a distinctive shape for its metallic coins (see Table 3), but the ceramic coins are all circular and molded so that they can be broken into 10 separate pie-shaped pieces. Each of these pieces or "bits" is worth one-tenth of a ceramic piece. Ceramic pieces differ in the color of their glazing (see Table 2) and in the designs on their tail sides. Naturally, each kingdom adopts the face of its ruler on the head of the coins (see Table 3). Each city-state also has different names for its coins.

Table 2: Distinguishing Ceramic Glazes

Balic	**Olive Green**
Draj	**White**
Gulg	**Blue**
Nibenay	**Yellow**
Raam	**Brown**
Tyr	**Red**
Urik	**Black**

Table 3: Shapes for Metallic Currency & Head Designs

City	Shape	Head design
Balic	Heptagon	Profile
Draj	Circle	Face with two moons
Gulg	Circle & round hole	Smiling face, leaves
Nibenay	Pentagon & round corners	Shadowed profile
Raam	Octagon & square hole	Haughty profile, crown
Tyr	Octagon	Full face, circlet
Urik	Hexagon	Leonine face, sword

Head Designs

Balic: Every coin displays the profile of Andropinis as its head design. The profile shows a slender face with a long, pointed nose and short hair beneath a jagged crown. The mouth is slightly open to reveal pointed teeth.

Draj: The face of Tectuktitlay glares forth from each coin. The face is elongated, even snoutlike, with intricately carved scales around the flared nostrils. Upon the brow are depicted Athas's twin moons, one full, the other a crescent.

Gulg: Lalali-Puy is depicted as a breath-takingly gorgeous woman. Her lips are full and smiling, her skin smooth, her hair rich and flowing and entwined with tiny leaves and flowers, representing her forest home. Holding back her cascading mass of hair is a fragile crown of fine-spun metal hung with jewels and carved birds. It takes a careful observer to spot the steely glint in her eyes.

Nibenay: The shadowed profile of this sorcerer-king is difficult to distinguish from the dark backdrop of Nibenese architecture. The king's face seems barely human. The head is hairless and slightly pointed beneath the heavy crown. The profile is vaguely reptilian, with prominent eye ridges and a long, protruding nose. The neck seems overly long as well, holding the head far above the shoulders.

Raam: Every coin shows the profile of Abalach-Re, the Grand Vizier. She is depicted as a stunning woman, though proud and defiant. She has a long aquiline nose. Her hair is sleek and long, flowing like silk from an overlarge, gem-encrusted crown.

Tyr: Until recently, each octagonal coin of Tyr bore Kalak's profile. Since his death, however, it has been the sole purpose of coinsmiths to remake all money in Tithian's likeness. Tyr's currency now bears the face of the new king. It is the most human-looking face of all the sorcerer-kings and is adorned in a simple circlet. Coins bearing the image of Kalak are no longer considered legal tender, but if melted are still worth the price of the metal.

Urik: The face of Hamanu dominates the head of each Urikite coin. He is shown bearing a sword and surrounded by a halo of fire. The face is leonine with large eyes and a powerful jaw.

Denominations by City

Balic

The various heptagonal coins of this city reflect Andropinis's emblems of state. The solar emblem is universally found, blatantly incorporated into the designs of banners, uniforms, and architecture. It is also subtly crafted into shields, fabrics, and jewelry. The sword and shield represent the city at war, and the olive, urn, grain, and kank designs reflect the main commodities of Balic.

The silver coin is commonly known as an agora, which means "silver" in the slang of the common class. The design on the silver agora shows a round shield bearing the familiar solar emblem of Balic, laying across a finely crafted long sword. The coin known as the Dictator is named in honor of the sorcerer-king himself.

Draj

Tectuktitlay's obsession with the power of the twin moons of Athas has led to the frequent use of lunar symbolism in all

aspects of Draji culture and can be seen on ceramic and silver coins of the city.

The pyramid that adorns the full moon coin represents the king's palace and is shown in lavish detail.

The tectuk, named for the king, bears the most powerful of Draji emblems: a representation of the mythical smoking mirror, a huge obsidian slab said to capture the soul of any coward who looks into it.

Gulg

The names of the coins of this city-state bear witness to the great importance of hunting in Gulg society. The talon and claw represent the totems received by adolescents during their rites of passage. Judaga is the name by which Gulg warriors are known and means literally "head hunter," from the practice of claiming a defeated enemy's head as a prize. The main weapons of the judaga are poisoned darts, which appear on the ceramic pieces.

The Crescent Forest satisfies all the needs of the inhabitants of Gulg, both the mundane and the exotic, and it is this luxury that is manifest in the orchid emblem on the reverse of the judaga.

The sorcerer-queen Lalali-Puy is honored in the name of the most valuable coin. She is known to her subjects as the oba, which means "forest goddess." The huge agafari tree shown on the reverse of the golden oba depicts the queen's ornate palace built amongst its branches.

The metal coins of Gulg have an offset circular hole in them. Natives of Gulg string their coins together to carry them easily.

Nibenay

Since rice is the staple food of the populace, it is fitting that the symbol that appears on the most common coins of this city-state is the rice plant, shown heavy with plump grain, ripe for harvesting.

The metallic coins of Nibenay are five-sided with rounded corners. The chisel design reflects the Nibenese passion for decorating buildings with stone reliefs.

On the gold crown, the cilops (a gigantic centipede with one eye) is shown in an aggressive stance with the front half of its body raised off the ground. The cilops emblem is the royal seal of the Shadow King, and this is why it appears on this most valuable of coins.

Raam

The metal coins of Raam are octagonal with an off-center square hole, allowing citizens to thread the coins onto leather thongs, which are then hidden in the folds of clothing.

The strict caste system is embodied in the names of Raamite coinage. The most valuable coin pays homage to the sorcerer queen herself, while the others depict three of the five tiers of society in descending order of importance. The vizier honors the administrative class of Raam. The unblinking eye shown on the ceramic pieces serves to remind all Raamites that the kuotagha (secret police) are always watching. The silk wyrm on the reverse of the vizier is shown coiled around a stone pillar and is said to be one of Abalach-Re's prized pets. The gold piece has on it a muscular four-armed man dressed only in a loincloth. This figure is Badna, a fictitious being from whom Abalach-Re claims to have gained her powers.

Tyr

Tyr's economy is in flux since the death of the tyrant Kalak. All coins bearing his profile have been recalled so they can be reforged in Tithian's likeness. Henceforth, the gold piece will be known as a Tithian Gold but will still carry the image of the ziggurat to remind the populace that Kalak's greatest achievement was also his downfall.

The bit and tenbit boast a typical obsidian-bladed gladius on their obverse, the favored weapon of many gladiators in the arena.The metal coins of Tyr are octagonal and have a milled edge. The two crossed swords on the silver piece are of different designs: one is a wooden bastard sword, and across it lies a bone-handled falchion. The silver talent is commonly known as a templar's gold, a reminder to all that templars are often color-blind when paying.

Urik

The metallic coins of Urik are six-sided and bear a small border of flames around their edges. The names of the coins reflect the different occupations prevalent in the city—except, of course, the gold piece, which is named for Hamanu himself. The gold piece, or Hamanu Gold, is also known as an auric, but not in Hamanu's hearing.

The arrow symbol portrayed on the obverse of the ceramic coins is shown fletched in fire rather than in feathers, and it has a barbed obsidian head.

The silver piece boasts a halberd dripping blood from its chipped obsidian blade. The fire-maned lion, one heavy paw resting on a defeated foe, is obviously meant to pay homage to the great warrior King, Hamanu. ❑

Name	Tail design
Balic	
Chip	Olive
Penny	10 olives in a ring
Silver/Agora	Sword & shield
Dictator	Sheaf of grain
Draj	
Star	Crescent moon
Crescent	10 crescents in a ring
Full moon	Pyramid & two moons
Tectuk	Smoking mirror
Gulg	
Talon	Feathered dart
Claw	10 darts in a ring
Judaga	Orchid
Oba	Huge agafari tree
Nibenay	
Piece	Rice plant
Tenpiece	10 rice plants in a ring
Mark	Chisel
Crown	Cilops
Raam	
Slave	Eye
Common	10 eyes in a circle
Vizier	Silk wyrm
Abalach	Badna
Tyr	
Bit	Short sword
Tenbit	10 short swords
Talent	Two crossed swords
Kalak Gold	Ziggurat

New Weapons

For the DARK SUN® Setting

by Gregory W. Detwiler

This collection of new weapons, with emphasis on gladiatorial combats, is intended for the Dark Sun® campaign setting. According to *The Complete Gladiator's Handbook,* there can never be too many weapons for gladiators to choose from. And so here we expand the gladiators' choices.

Note that unless otherwise stated in the text, weapons are presumed to be made of steel. Non-steel variations of these weapons (wood, bone, or stone) will cost less and be less effective, as described by the rules in the DARK SUN boxed set.

Chain Whip

Cost: 21 gp
Weight: 3 1/2
Size: M
Type: —
Speed Factor: 9
Damage S-M/L: 1d3/1d2

The chain whip is a 7-foot length of chain made of thinner links and finer steel than the ordinary light chain (hence its lesser weight and greater cost). Ironically, this favored gladiator weapon in the arenas of Athas was created as a result of the improvisations of revolting gladiators who managed to break their chains and use them as whips on their guards—and masters, when they could catch them. Montare who favor the catch-and-drag fighting style use this weapon most often. It is also favored by beast trainers, who use it to whip their charges into submission. Note that because the chain whip weights more than a normal whip, montare (who automatically gain specialization in the whip at no cost) must still pay to specialize separately in the chain whip.

Proficient Use: Fighters proficient in the use of the chain whip may be able to entangle an opponent, rendering him unable to defend.

Specialized Use: With specialized use, the wielder may employ more finesse, lashing out and entangling a single limb.

This attack is most often used by montare, who use it in the catch-and-drag attack style to seize an opponent's leg, yank him off his feet, and drag him about the arena floor.

Dejada Cestus

Cost: 10 gp
Weight: 9
Size: M
Type: P/S/B
Speed Factor: 2 (cestus) or 8 (dejada)
Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d6 (cestus) or 1d8/1d6 (dejada)
ROF: 1/1
Range S/M/L: 1/2/3

This weapon is basically a reinforced version of the normal dejada, made with heavier bones to stand up to the impact of blows in melee combat.

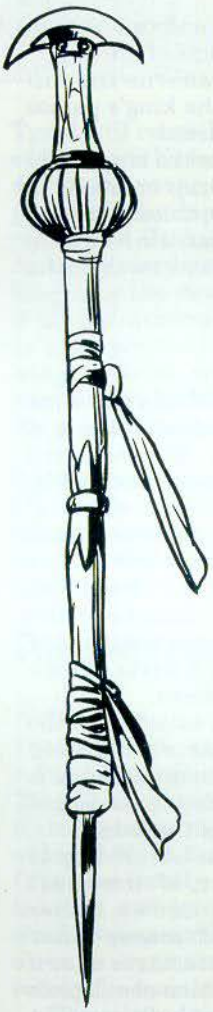
It is also heavily studded with spikes, ensuring that the gladiator will (unlike normal dejada users) be able to defend herself against any opponent who manages to close the range. Arena fighters love this version, as it gives them both melee and short-range missile attack capabilities.

Proficient Use: As with the normal dejada, a user can throw one specialized missile, or pelota, per round, and add her Strength bonus for each attack. Because the cestus is a brute-force weapon, there is no bonus for weapon proficiency in melee combat with the dejada cestus.

Specialized Use: A specialist may, if she finds herself on the receiving end of an opponent's dejada, make a saving throw vs. petrification to try to catch the pelota.

If she has any subsequent attacks left in the round, she may make an immediate return throw. As with proficiency, specialization provides no advantages to using the weapon as a cestus.

Gladiator's Friends



Gladiator's Friend, Footman's

Cost: 15 gp
Weight: 15
Size: L
Type: B/P/S
Speed Factor: 8
Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d8 (blade or spike) or 1d6+1/1d6 (head)

Cost: 10 gp
Weight: 7
Size: M
Type: B/P/S
Speed Factor: 6
Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d4 (blade or spike) or 1d4/1d4 (head)

The gladiator's friend is a short pole arm six feet long, designed to give gladiators an appropriate weapon type (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing) when the occasion arises. One end, used as the butt end, terminates in a large spike which inflicts damage as a spear. The other end is surmounted by the head of a footman's mace, topped by a fauchard blade as a halberd's axe head is topped by a spike.

The pole arm version was the original, but it was not long before enterprising weaponsmiths came up with a smaller version for one-handed use. This weapon is a horseman's mace with a short curved blade atop the head and a small spike at the other end of the handle. It does less damage, but can be wielded more quickly. As before, versatility in combat is the advantage it provides, and a match between two gladiators each armed with a gladiator's friend is a fascinating contest indeed.

Proficient Use: Because of the complexities of this weapon, there are no special advantages merely for being proficient in its use.

Specialized Use: The specialist has several advantages. First, he can switch from attacking with one end to attacking with the other in a single round, flipping the weapon around in a single fluid motion. Second, he can use the wooden haft to parry, like a wooden short sword or quarterstaff, depending on which version he is using. Finally, he can make two attacks per round, providing one of the following conditions is met:

1) He makes both attacks on the same foe with the same method (i.e., head, spike, or blade).
2) He attacks a foe to his front with the mace head and then slashes at one to either side with the blade.
3) He attacks a foe to his front with the mace head or the blade atop it, then makes a stabbing attack with the spike at a foe directly to his rear.

Hamanu's Staff
Cost: 10 gp
Weight: 5
Size: L
Type: B
Speed Factor: 4
Damage S-M/L: 1d8/1d8

This weapon is most frequently used among the gladiators of Urik. It looks like a quarterstaff-sized version of the "staves of Hamanu" that are scattered throughout Urik's "Pit of Black Death" arena. The entire staff is covered with short spikes, save for two areas that are barely large enough for a man-sized or smaller gladiator safely to hold it.

One of the sights that most amuses the fans of Urik is to see a gladiator try hastily to pick up a dropped staff of this nature. Note that due to Urik's obsidian mines, the majority of these staves will be made of this black stone (and will be cheaper and less effective as a result). Beast trainers tend to use this weapon slightly more than do the other gladiatorial classes.

Proficient Use: Anyone proficient with this weapon may use it as a regular quarterstaff, spinning it through a variety of maneuvers to parry enemy blows.

Specialized Use: A specialist may make two attacks in a single round, provided they are made against two different foes.

The first target must always be in front of the wielder, while the second can be behind or to the side.

Hawk Hatchet
Cost: 2 gp
Weight: 6
Size: M
Type: P/S
Speed Factor: 5
Damage S-M/L: 1d6+1 /1d4 (axe) or 1d4+1/1d4 (wings)

The hawk hatchet (pictured on page 11 of *The Complete Gladiator's Handbook*) gets its name from the shape of its head. The larger-than-usual hand axe head is shaped like the head of a hawk.

Beneath the hawk's head are a pair of "wings," one longer than the other.

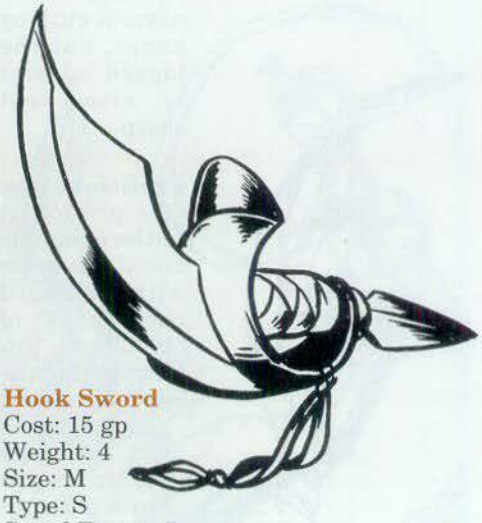
These wings are blades that inflict damage equivalent to that of a horseman's pick, while the "head" itself is also sharpened, doing the same damage as a regular hand axe.

Proficient Use: One who is proficient in the hawk hatchet's use may make one extra attack per round, provided the second target is behind him.

The wielder uses the back "wing" in a backhand slash.

Specialized Use: A specialist may use either curved blade, either the back "wing" or the hawk head's "beak," to catch an opponent's weapon and attempt to tear it from her grasp.

The hawk hatchet adds +2 to all attempts to use the Disarm or Expert Disarm skill.



Hook Sword
Cost: 15 gp
Weight: 4
Size: M
Type: S
Speed Factor: 5
Damage S-M/L: 1d8+1/1d8

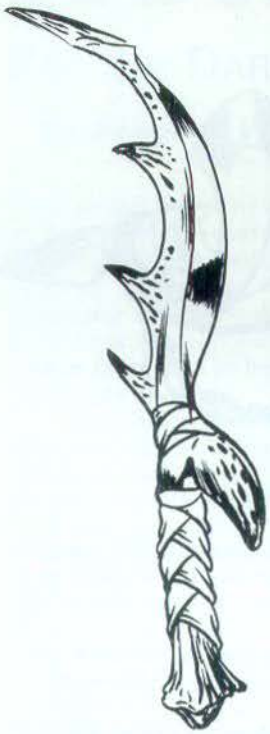
The hook sword is a scimitarlike weapon whose cutting edge juts out slightly in a hooklike curve from the main part of the blade. Because of the benefits it provides, it is favored by montare who specialize in the move-by attack style.

Proficient Use: Because of the curve to the cutting portion of the blade, the hook sword does an extra point of damage to foes of all sizes when the wielder slashes down from a chariot or mount, using both gravity and the forward momentum of the animal or vehicle to put more power into the slash.

Specialized Use: The gladiator may use the hook sword to disarm his opponent, adding +1 to all attempts to use the Disarm or Expert Disarm skills.

Mandible Sword
Cost: 6 gp
Weight: 3
Size: M
Type: P
Speed Factor: 4
Damage S-M/L: 1d8/1d6 (front edges) or 1d6 /1d4 (back edge)

There is only one material this can be made of: the mandible of a giant insect such as a kank, soldier antloid, or gaj. When added to a hilt, it becomes a sabre-sized weapon lighter than steel, making it a handier weapon in the cut-and-parry of melee combat. As such, it is favored by all gladiators who prefer speed and finesse over brute force. The outer edge of the mandible is sharpened



to serve as the normal cutting edges, but the jagged interior is also kept sharp.

Proficient Use: One proficient in the mandible sword can strike with the jagged back edge of the blade, inflicting the damage listed above.

Though doing less damage insofar as hit points are concerned, wounds created by the jagged edge tend to be bloodier in appearance, and thus more popular with the brutal fans. Because of this effect, it is one of the few swords favored by the jazst class.

Specialized Use: One specialized in using the mandible sword may strike two blows, front and back, in a single round, inflicting damage with the outer and inner blades respectively.

The second target must always be directly behind the wielder or to either flank.

Quad Fauchard

Cost: 20 gp
Weight: 20
Size: L
Type: S
Speed Factor: 9
Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d8

This fauchard is created by lashing four fauchard blades at the end of a single pole so that the wielder can slash out at a foe from any direction without taking the time to shift his grip on the weapon.

This makes it a favorite among blind fighters, but it is also favored by reavers and beast trainers.

Proficient Use: The gladiator can strike two blows in battle against two different foes, so long as the second blow is struck to either flank.

Specialized Use: A specialist may strike to the rear as his second blow per round.

Because of the unwieldiness of the large quad fauchard, the opponent to the rear must be of size L or larger (usually a giant or half-giant in practice).

Rim Club

Cost: 2 sp
Weight: 12
Size: L
Type: B
Speed Factor: 10
Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d6

The rim club is a new improvised weapon, just as the montare class of gladiator is new, because it was first created by a montare's opponent from a shattered chariot wheel.

Basically, the rim club is a 3- to 4-foot-long fragment from the rim of a broken wagon or chariot wheel (a heavy one), or a weapon shaped that way when made by scratch by a craftsman (the price is for the latter). A curved great club, it bestows distinct advantage on its wielder. Muls, half-giants, and those powerful enough to favor brute-force weapons all use it; only half-giants can use it one-handed.

Some beast trainers and reavers also favor it, as much for subdual as for regular combat.

Proficient Use: When the rim club's wielder is in a position above his foe, whether atop a rock, stairway, chariot, or mount, he adds +2 to the weapon's damage due to the curved haft.

Specialized Use: None.

Spike Shield

Cost: 15 gp
Weight: 18
Size: L
Type: P
Speed Factor: 6
Damage S-M/L: 1d8/1d6

The spike shield is a large circular shield. Its wooden foundation is covered with a layer of leather and festooned with sharp spikes.

Perhaps the ultimate brute-force weapon, its use is simple. The wielder simply crouches behind the shield and charges, seeking to bowl over his opponent as well as impale him with the spikes (i.e., the shield-rush tactic described on page 41 of *The Complete Gladiator's Handbook*).

The shield-punch tactic described on the same page may also be used.

Training is more complex than it seems. Holding his shield close, the gladiator is trained to pivot on his heels and whirl about with it to face a new foe instantly.

It is for this reason that the spike shield's speed factor is as low as it is. All brute-force gladiators use this weapon; dwarves use a shorter version with longer spikes (same stats).

Proficient Use: One who is proficient in the spike shield's use adds +2 to the damage total to any foe of size M or smaller that he actually knocks off his feet with a shield-rush attack.

Specialized Use: A specialist in the spike shield's use can use it to parry an attack actively.

Note that this means he will not be able to make an attack of his own during that round.

Whistling Maces

Whistling Mace, Footman's
Cost: 12 gp
Weight: 6
Size: M
Type: B
Speed Factor: 6
Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d4

Whistling Mace, Horseman's
Cost: 9 gp
Weight: 3
Size: M
Type: B
Speed Factor: 5
Damage S-M/L: 1d4+1/1d2+1

The majority of these maces have partially hollowed-out heads, giving them a pitted appearance. When swung, the wind whistles through the heads, creating an eerie and quite unnerving sound. Stone versions of this weapon have heads made of hatik, a volcanic rock peculiar to Athas, porous as pumice but as hard as flint or obsidian. Bone and wooden heads must be laboriously drilled by craftsmen, and steel-headed versions require special molds. The lighter weight means these maces inflict less damage than conventional versions, but aside from their effects on morale, the increased quickness often makes up for the reduced damage.

Proficient Use: One who swings the whistling mace as it should be swung will be able to create the eerie keening sound at will, forcing his opponent to make a morale check. All modifiers apply; note that if the opponent has never heard such a weapon before, the morale check is at a -2 penalty.

Expert Use: A specialist may make an extra attack with the weapon each round, due to its lighter and handier nature compared to normal maces. ❑

Enemy of My Enemy

An AD&D® Game DARK SUN® Setting Adventure

by Tom Prusa

Background

This adventure begins with the PCs as slaves who are performing as arena contestants. In Athas, the arena is one of the chief forms of entertainment, and the PCs start by fighting each other. The outcome does not really matter, since the PCs are the most well known of their respective noble houses' gladiators. There are templars (priests) waiting to *heal* or cast *raise dead* on them.

While any healing takes place, the sorcerer-king of Urik has a special match. A captured So-ut is featured in a bout against 20 captured slaves. The so-ut, or ravager, has no trouble dispatching the slaves, but is not satisfied merely with killing them. As soon as he gets done with them, he begins to destroy the arena. In the ensuing panic, the PCs are left alone and may escape. They must make their way out of the city and to a village of former slaves, which they have heard of. The halfling druid's guarded land is the mountain on which the village is located.

The PCs are able to leave the arena area, and make it into the city proper. There, they encounter a group of templars. The templars are suspicious of such a group, and they must be bribed or quickly defeated to allow the PCs to leave the town. The PCs must also pick up some supplies, or they will not survive in the wilderness. After obtaining supplies, the PCs may leave the city,and strike out east for the mountain K'lir. After traveling for a while, the characters' water mysteriously starts to disappear. They are being trailed by a sand mother, a Negative Material Plane creature trapped on Athas. After they are out of water, they find an oasis that is really a trap. They must defeat the sand mother before it drains all the life from them. And they still have no water.

The second day after finding the sand mother, the party finally reaches a true oasis.

There they can deal with the elf nomads who have possession of the oasis. A good bit of bargaining allows them to get plenty of water. While at the oasis, an elf shaman tells them of a pursuing band of templars and guards. The elves leave in a hurry, helping themselves to some of the characters' items on the way.

They travel for almost a week without encountering anything that endangers them. By this time, they are running very low on water. They finally come upon a possible source of water, some spider cacti. Unfortunately, the spider cacti do not give up their water without a fight. After defeating the cacti, the party may continue on, with enough water to travel for a while. After going around the silt basin, the PCs finally reach the slave village. There, they are turned away. The village does not want their location revealed to the pursuing templars. Only if the PCs can defeat the sorcerer-king's guard will they be allowed into the village.

With the knowledge of the druid and the ranger, the PCs can set up a suitable ambush. This is important, for the PCs are badly outnumbered. In a final climactic battle, the PCs earn either their freedom or their death.

Players' Background

Tonight you go into the arena again. You sharpen weapons, taking last swigs of water, and in general getting ready.

You hear the roar of the crowd as the poor souls who have to fight in the preliminaries do battle. From the sounds of it, several prospective gladiators are facing a tembo. Too bad for them.

Fortunately, you are head-liners. You fight in the featured match tonight.

As important gladiators (that is to say, moneymakers), you will have templars waiting to heal or revive you if you lose.

Of course, your masters don't like you to lose. You could end up in the quarries. And everyone knows what happens in the obsidian quarries. You won't last long with that razor-sharp stone cutting into your hands. The match tonight is a triple. As you sit with butterflies in your stomachs and sweat on your hands, you all think again how much you hate this. This is not the life for you. You are going to escape, somehow. Athas is a hard world, but there must be better pickings out there somewhere. Then you hear the gong. The last bout is over. You're up next. Checking your weapons one more time, you wish your teammates well. It's time to fight.

Arena

Today's match is a version of the Stones game. The arena is divided into 10-foot squares, five across and six deep.

If miniatures are available, they should be placed on a simple 5" by 6" grid to help indicate positions. If not, you may wish to use dice or something else to keep track of movement.

1. Each PC is given a big red stone. While each man on the opposing team has a blue stone. The first team to collect all of their opponents' stones and return them to the home square is declared the winner.

2. Each team has a captain, chosen by the team. The captain is allowed to move two squares either horizontally or vertically. He cannot move diagonally. The other members of the team may move one square in any direction.

3. The two captains roll a d20, with the higher roll having the first move. Each turn takes place in one round. In a turn, one member of the team may move.

The other members of the team may fire missile weapons or cast spells. Psionics may be used by anyone on either team, no matter whose turn it is. Use of psionics does count as an action. (A PC may not use a psionic power and fire a missile weapon in the same turn.) A team MUST have someone move during its turn. Two members of the same team may not end up on the same square at the end of a turn. The turn then passes to the other team.

4. If two opposing team members are on the same square at the end of a move, they must engage in combat until one or the other is slain.

The game is suspended for as long as it takes to resolve the combat. Other PCs may use psionics, although they cannot fire missile weapons during this combat.

5. Stones must be carried; they cannot be thrown to another team member. They may be passed to a team member in an adjacent square.

6. Each violation of these rules earns a *flame strike* (40 points, save vs. spells for half damage) from the templars.

Set up the game and run through it. PCs who are brought below zero hit points are removed from the arena and healed. Otherwise they are raised, to preserve them for future combats.

Treat this as a *resurrection*, with the PC immediately returned to full hit points, able to move and cast spells. Any raised PCs are subject to a one-point Constitution loss, with corresponding possible loss of hit points as well.

Should a weaker PC decide to fake death, for instance, dropping to the ground while still above zero hit points, the templars on the sides of the squares immediately whip him with glass-edged whips, and call for him to get up and fight.

This whipping causes 1-4 points of damage per round. If the PC continues to lie on the ground after one round, the crowd gets into it, and the PC takes an additional 1-2 points of damage from stones and objects thrown by the crowd. The crowd is here to see a good battle.

It doesn't matter which team wins; all of the PCs are taken or dragged to the same room, a cell just off of the arena. There they are healed (*cure critical wounds* for anyone below zero hit points, *cure serious wounds* for anyone conscious but wounded).

They are locked in while the next match takes place. The next match is the feature, 20 captured Tyrians vs. a So-ut (ravager). This match causes intense interest, since none here, including the sorcerer-king, has seen a ravager in action.

Escape

Following their match, the PCs are all taken to one large cell. There, they are constantly watched by over a dozen guards and templars—that is, until the next match begins. The ravager has no trouble mowing down the captured slaves. But it is not satisfied with the destruction of the humans. So-uts hate all manufactured things, and once the so-ut has finished with the slaves, he begins on the arena itself.

This causes widespread panic, and after checking to make sure the cell door is securely locked, the templars and guards run into the arena to help combat the monster. This gives the PCs their golden opportunity. Only two locked doors stand between them and freedom.

It was a tough match, and all of you are feeling the effects. As you sit in the cell after the match, you can talk with the other team. As you discuss the game, and the possible ramifications for the losers, you can hear the roar of the crowd. A group of captured guards from the city of Tyr are facing some sort of fierce monster.

Then you hear the sounds change. The crowd noise has changed to a panicky sound, and the templars and guards are looking worried.

A templar comes running in from the arena and cries to your guards: "The beast is attempting to destroy the arena itself. He is digging through stone as though it were sand. Hurry, we must help!"

The guards run off, although one of them does stop to make sure your cell door is securely locked.

For the first time in years, you have no guards about. You can escape.

This is the opportunity they have been waiting for. Inform the PCs that if they can make it through the cell door, there is a 50' hallway, with guards at the end—if the guards have not had to go help try to subdue the ravager. At the end of the hallway is another locked door that leads to the outside of the arena complex.

The PCs should immediately pick up on this; no hints should be required. If they seem to be willing to sit and wait, you can point out to the gladiators that they have never had an opportunity like this before. It is time to see if their teammates have any skills that might allow them to escape.

The cell is actually a stone room, with a hardwood door, brass bound. It is designed with the idea of keeping in someone of extraordinary strength. The PCs have three possible methods of opening the door.

1. A thief can pick the locks with a normal open locks roll.

2. A knock spell would be successful.

3. Up to two PCs can cooperate to break open the locked door with their combined Bend Bars/Lift Gates chances.

4. If the PCs refuse to escape, the ravager digs through their prison wall, allowing them another avenue. If they still refuse, they will be forever stuck in arena life.

The PCs have seven rounds to get out of the cell before the templars return. The templars were not able to subdue the ravager, and in the end they were finally forced to kill it, taking significant damage in the process.

Once out of the cell, the hallway lies clear. The door at the end of the hall is apparently unguarded.

It is locked. It can be opened by any of the methods listed above.

Once the door is open, the PCs find that a pair of guards have been left outside.

The guards immediately raise the alarm. Because of the noise from the arena, this alarm goes unnoticed. The PCs must handle the guards quickly.

Guards (2): AL LE; AC 4; MV 24; HD 5; hp 40, 35; THAC0 15; #AT 3/2; D 1d8+2.

The guards are carrying bone long swords, with which they are specialized. They wear hide armor, and use leather shields. Each has a Strength of 17 and a Dexterity of 15.

The PCs do not have much time to deal with the guards. The templars discover that the PCs are missing eight rounds after leaving them. In round nine, three guards and two templars appear in the cell area. The guards have no idea how long the PCs have been gone, and they will return to the palace to send out a group to catch the PCs. If the PCs are still in the cells when the three guards and two templars appear, the PCs must fight to gain their freedom.

Guards, additional (3): AL LE; AC 4; MV 24, HD 5, hp (currently) 24, 15, 8; THAC0 15; #AT 3/2; D 1d8+2. These guards have the same equipment and statistics as the previous guards.

Templars (2): AL LE; AC 1; MV 24, HD 7, hp (currently) 17, 12; THAC0 17; #AT 1; D 1d6+1 (bone shortswords + Str bonus), SA spells, SD spells. These templars have hide armor, leather shields. Strength 16, Dexterity 17, Wisdom 16. Spells still memorized: *command, cure light wounds, cause light wounds, hold person, silence 15' radius, spiritual hammer, dispel magic.*

Since the above timetable could be confusing, the following list summarizes some of the possibilities.

Round 1: Alarm is raised; guards leave PCs in the cell.

Round 2 (or later): PCs unattended, may break out of cell and exit arena complex via the hallway.

Round 3: Soonest PCs could get to outer door.

Round 4 (or later): Must fight the two posted guards.

Round 8: Latest PCs could leave cell and still escape.

Round 9: Latest PCs could leave outer door and still escape.

Round 10: Wounded templars and guards join the battle, if the PCs are still in the cell area.

Try to keep a sense of urgency about this whole encounter. The PCs have one chance. If they blow it, it's the obsidian quarries for sure. No one survives long there, so failure is tantamount to death. In their favor, the guards are arrogant and very sure of themselves. The guards first order the PCs back to their cages, giving the PCs automatic initiative the first round of melee.

Possible problems: The PCs should be able to brush aside the guards in two or three rounds at most. Do not kill the PCs, or blow the rest of the adventure just because the PCs get a series of bad rolls.

Once the PCs have escaped, they see a dirty street stretching before them for about two blocks. There is a noble's estate on either side of the street, on each block. There are many guards outside these structures, so the PCs should realize that would be a bad way to go.

Point out there is a marketplace nearby, and that likely affords the best chance to lose themselves in the crowd.

The Marketplace

The market is a chaotic jumble of merchants selling armor, weapons, foodstuffs, water, and just about anything else the PCs can think of. There are two types of things that will not be found. The first is spell components of any sort, and the second is artwork or books. Spell components and books are highly illegal, and artwork is usually done by slaves. Once they are through the main marketplace, the PCs come upon the elven market, where some goods of questionable origin and value are sold. By asking the right questions, they could find spell components or books here. The party doesn't really have time for a leisurely shopping trip, but the PCs do need water. They can get water for one bit per gallon. A one-gallon waterskin, full, costs 1 cp. For purposes of determining how much water a PC can carry, each gallon with container weighs nine pounds. If the characters really want mounts, allow them to find a dealer in animals. The dealer wants to talk, and moves very slowly. While they are dealing, a group of templars appears at the other end of the marketplace and begins checking out the crowd very carefully.

The dealer notices them, and wonders aloud who the templars are after now. This should get the PCs moving.

Gate to Freedom

At last, you approach the gate that leads outside the city—and beyond the gate is the precious freedom you seek.

A group of templars and dust-covered soldiers is on guard here. As you approach, you can tell that there are at least 50 soldiers and templars . . . a formidable barrier to reaching the outside.

You cannot fight your way past this foe, not in time, anyway. Still, you're not about to give up hope yet. And there are two things in your favor here.

The guards are here to keep intruders out, not in. Also, templars are notoriously greedy. The gates are currently shut and locked, and on either side of the gates is a tower with a group of alert crossbowmen.

As you approach, some of them turn to watch you.

You are the only group heading out of the city right now. One of the templars is on the wall, yelling down at someone out of sight.

Someone must be trying to get into the city after dark. It's probably going to cost them plenty.

The PCs have a few options here. They can wait for the people outside to be let in and make a run for it. They can also try to talk or bribe their way out.

The first option works only if the PCs are lucky. Everyone must make a Dexterity check, and then 25 crossbow bolts are fired at them—four at each PC, with the extra fired at the tallest PC. The crossbowmen have a THAC0 of 18 and do 1d4-1 points of damage (bone-tipped crossbow bolts). They are all AC 5, and have 17 hit points. Each PC must also save vs. *hold person*, but not until after they get through the gate. Any half-giants are too large to be considered a "person" for purposes of a *hold person* spell.

The less dangerous options include talking their way through, or bribing their way. A combination of both is the best plan. The PCs are questioned as to why they want to leave the city.

Traveling at night is not a foolish option, especially on Athas. Why, the temperature is down to almost 90! If the PCs come up with a believable story, the templar on the wall won't give them too much problem, merely suggesting that the half-elf looks like a thief he once knew; perhaps a visit to the prison is in order. This is a hint for a bribe. As long as the PCs come up with a gold piece or more, the templar will let them pass. If the party offers the bribe first, the head templar wants more, perhaps as much as two gold pieces.

One story that would work very well is if the PCs report that they are a special group sent out to capture some escaped slaves. The templars spend a few minutes talking to them, wanting descriptions and numbers of the escaped slaves, laughing about the tortures in store for the slaves when captured, and wishing the PCs luck out there in the wilderness. The templars seem very glad not to have to leave the city, and mention things such as "I sure wouldn't want to be in your sandals, even if you find the slaves."

Guards (50): AL LE; AC 5; MV 24; HD 3, hp 18 each, THAC0 17; #AT 1; D 1d4-1 (lt. crossbows) or 1d6 (bone short-swords). The guards all have a Strength of 17 and a Dexterity of 16. They wear leather armor and have leather bucklers slung on their back (AC 4 in melee).

Templars (5): AL LE; AC 2; MV 24; HD 7, HP 30 each, THAC0 16; #AT 1; D 1d6 (bone short swords); SA spells, SD spells. The templars wear hide armor, and have Strength, Dexterity, and Wisdom of 16 each.

Spells memorized include *hold person, command, cause light wounds* (x2), *cure light wounds, merciful rays* (new spell, listed on the druid's character sheet), *dispel magic, cause disease, silence 15' radius*, a *spiritual hammer*.

If the PCs end up in a battle here, you might mention that this is an unwinable battle, especially since the alarms begin sounding immediately. The only hope is to make a fighting retreat through the gates, and to make a dash for freedom.

On the Road to Freedom

Having finally escaped the city, you set out toward Mount K'lir. Not all of you are sure of the reception you'll get, but you all know that you really have nowhere else to go.

You travel for most of the night, and then look about for a suitable shelter.

As dawn is breaking, and the temperature begins to rise, you locate a rocky overhang that will give you suitable protection from the heat, as well as concealment from any who might be following you.

You settle down for an uncomfortable day of rest.

The PCs can rest here, but the spellcasters cannot get enough good rest to recover more than first- and second-level spells. When they have rested and healed as much as possible, they may continue on the trail. They are currently moving through rocky badlands. They must leave the trail to head for Mount K'lir, located two weeks' travel to the east. Find out when the party intends to march. The best times are the two hours just before and just after dawn, and the same time periods at dusk. This keeps their water intake low and still allows the spellcasters to recover spells. The party may march for three days with no encounters. Play out the healing, for some of the PCs may have been very hurt. Also, keep track of water usage. If the players are getting bored, let the time go by quickly.

After three days, the PCs move into an area of sandy wastes. This terrain type resembles the classic desert, shifting sand, and large sand dunes. On the morning of the fifth day after leaving the city, one of the PCs wakes up to find that a little more than four gallons of the water he carried are empty. There is no clue to the reason for the disappearance. (The water was destroyed by the monster the PCs will soon meet.) This water loss continues for two more days, less if the PCs run out of water before this. The day the PCs are out of water, they come upon an oasis after marching for an hour at dusk.

Sand Mother (new monster) (1): AL CE; AC -1; MV 24, Br 12; HD 9, hp 41, THAC0 11; #AT 2; D 1d12/1d12; SA Energy Drain, spell use; SD only affected by magic weapons.

A sand mother is a Negative Material Plane creature trapped on Athas. It drains one level with each hit. It is not undead, having never been alive, and cannot be turned. It uses its two spell-like powers to mask itself and the area. The first is a *hallucinatory terrain*, and the second is a *seeming*. It appears as an elderly female, trapped at the oasis by lack of transportation.

The illusion of the oasis is very good; only the ranger and the druid even get a chance to disbelieve. Her *seeming* illusion is also nearly perfect; chances to disbelieve are at -4.

When the PCs approach, they see an elderly human waving them over to the oasis. The old lady is very glad to see them, and invites them in for a drink. Use your best old lady voice, and babble on meaninglessly, trying to get the PCs to go ahead and take a drink. The unexplained water loss that the PCs have been experiencing may make them suspicious.

The sand mother's cover story is a typical one: her kank died, and she just found this oasis by luck. She was afraid raiders would find her; she's just so glad that "you brave children" got here first instead. All the while she is talking, she is assessing the PCs. Recognizing that the two gladiators with their magic weapons are the most dangerous to her, she tries to get the spellcasters to take a drink, and then attacks one of the gladiators from behind, if possible. Since the change in terrain from desert to oasis is extreme, as soon as someone takes a drink that character will see through the illusion.

Unfortunately, having a mouth full of dry, gritty sand is not conducive to spellcasting. If a spellcaster "drinks," it takes the character 2d3 rounds to clear his mouth enough to cast spells with verbal components.

The sand mother can attack two foes, if they are side by side. She attacks until she is down to 20 hit points, at which time she disappears into the sand, taking one round to do so. If the party moves on immediately after she disappears, she does not return. However, if the party lingers for more than a turn, she will reappear from behind and continue her attacks.

Since the PCs have no water, on the following day all characters suffer a loss of 1d4 Constitution points, with attendant hit point loss for those with Constitutions of 15 or above.

Elf Nomads

Finally, after you have almost given up, you see what you have been longing to see: an oasis! Your pace picks up for the first time in several days, and you all hurry toward that little sign of life—the small trees and greenery that mean an oasis. But the oasis is not unoccupied. As you move closer, you see signs of many tracks—elf tracks. You can only hope that this is a herding tribe, and not a group of raiders. Still, without water many of you won't survive more than a few days. You head toward the oasis, with a silent prayer to the spirits of the lands.

The elf nomads are a group of herders, keeping a small (about 150) herd of kanks, big insects that provide both food and water in the honey globules that some of them produce on their bellies. Kanks also forage for themselves, and instinctively divide into guards, food producers, and brood queens. This leaves the elves free to do the things they like most, partying and revelry.

Elf Nomads (60): AL N; AC 5; MV 36; HD 3; hp 26 each; THAC0 18 (bone long sword) or 16 (longbow); #AT 1 (sword) or 2 (bow); D 1d8-1 (sword) or 1d6 (arrows).

Elf chieftain, Sancro Lar'inth (1): AL N; AC 2; MV 36; HD 9; hp 54; THAC0 10; #AT 3/2 (metal long sword) or 2 (longbow); D 1d8+1 (sword) or 1d6 (arrows). He wears *leather armor +2* and has a Dexterity of 19 and a Strength of 17.

Elf Shaman, Mordekai, (1): AL N; AC 5; MV 36; HD 7; hp 30; THAC0 16; #AT 2; D 1d6; SA spells; SD spells. He wears leather armor and carries a longbow and a spear. Mordekai is a priest of water, and has the following spells: *create water* (x2), *cure light wounds* (x2), *sanctuary, hold person* (x2), *silence 15' radius, slow poison, dispel magic, cure disease, paralysis* (reversed *remove paralysis*), and *reflecting pool.*

The elves are suspicious at first; the party is met by a line of grim-looking elves between them and the oasis. The PCs must call out their intentions, and proclaim that they do not mean any harm to the elves; they are seeking only water. The elves then let them in to get a drink (which restores any Constitution losses). They are watched carefully by all the elves while this is going on.

The oasis is a fairly large one, with a pool of water under the shade of some trees that is almost 40' across. On the opposite side of the pool is the kank herd, and the tents of the elves are scattered all around the oasis. When the immediate need for water is satisfied, the chieftain and the shaman want to talk.

The first consideration is if the PCs have a thri-kreen with them. Thri-kreen are noted for eating elf flesh.

The PCs can stay overnight if the thri-kreen agrees to be tied up hand and foot. Otherwise the party must leave immediately, with no time to fill their waterskins.

With most elf tribes, the thri-kreen would have been killed as soon as he was spotted.

Once any thri-kreen aredealt with, the elves relax and become more friendly. They want to know what the PCs are doing in the wilderness. If the story of the escape is told, the elves become more friendly, for they hate the sorcerer-kings more than most, and the thought of slavery is very repugnant to them.

They offer the PCs food and drink; their drink is a heady wine that they have traded for. Most of the elves begin to drink heavily as the night progresses. PCs who drink sparingly and ask the right questions can learn some things that might be of help to them:

1. The sandy waste continues for about one day's travel to the east (for elves, about 50 miles). The PCs are headed straight for a inland silt basin.

2. In the silt, almost anyone suffocates in a matter of minutes. A fall would mean almost certain death for all of them. The silt basin is not large, about 50 miles in diameter.

3. To the south of the silt basin is a tribe of human raiders that the tribe has had trouble with. If the PCs are not very powerful, their journey is likely to end there.

4. It is about a week's travel to the mountains (for the PCs). This assumes they go around the silt basin to the north. If they can cross the basin itself, they can cut a day off of the travel time.

5. The tribe will be moving on in a day or two at most. They move around the area, and will not reveal the location of any other oasis. If pressed for information, they become surly and suspicious.

6. The elves are fascinated with one of the PCs' weapons.

7. Kanks would speed up the journey considerably. They would allow the party to move faster. They want 15 silver for each kank; this includes a riding harness. A kank requires four gallons of water a day, but can carry up to 400 pounds of cargo, including the rider.

Later on, during the night, the elf shaman casts a *reflecting pool.*

He discovers that the PCs are being followed by a group of soldiers and templars.

This is not the elves' fight; they aren't

going to stick around and help the PCs. They pack up and leave within an hour. Have each sleeping PC make a surprise roll; if every roll fails, they sleep through the whole thing. Anyone who drank wine makes the check at -4.

After the elves are gone, the PCs discover that each of them has lost some item or possession. Select items from the PCs at random, but be sure to leave the gladiators their main weapons. Small items such as rings are not taken. Waterskins are also not lost.

If the PCs have purchased mounts, these are also left behind. Before they leave, the shaman tells someone that there are templars on their trail, and they'll be here in less than two days.

Spider Cactus

It has been a week since you left the elves, and you have managed to stay ahead of the templars. Occasionally you can see the dust raised by their mounts; they must be using mekillots, or they'd have caught you by now. You found an inland silt basin, and circled north around it. Now, you are again worried about water—but then you spot a potential source of water. A group of thick cacti growing in a rough circle lies across your trail. You have never seen this type before, but if it's like any other life form on Athas, it's not without its defenses.

Spider Cactus (8): AL N; AC 7; Mv 0; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 8; D 1 + special; SA needles cause paralysis.

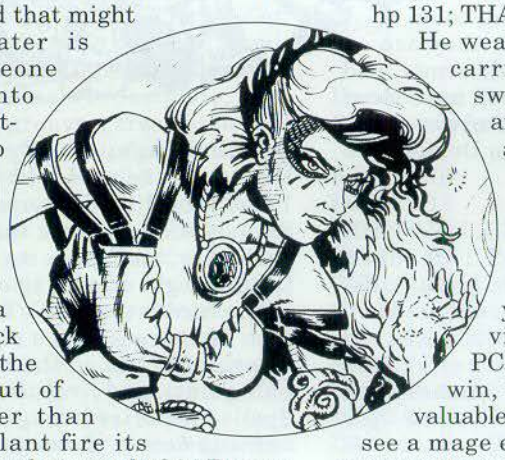
A spider cactus attacks when a victim gets within five feet, shooting out eight needles at its prey. These needles can only be fired once per day, so a cactus is defenseless after it has let loose its volley of eight needles. The needles have strong strands attached to them, which are used to pull the prey into the cactus's body, where the feeding needles begin to suck liquids from a victim's body. Any hit causes one point of damage and also requires a save vs. poison at +2 (the poison is rather weak). If the saving throw is failed, the victim is paralyzed for 2d4 rounds, during which time he cannot defend himself against the needles and must rely on other party members to help him get away.

The strands pull with a Strength of 17, and only those with greater strength have a chance to pull free (or to pull someone else free). It requires an Open Doors roll to pull a needle out of a victim's body, or a Bend Bars roll to break a strand. The strands can also be cut; they have an AC of 5, and suffer 5 points of damage to cut through. Blunt weapons do no damage to a strand. Pulling out one of the needles causes an additional 1d4 points of damage to the victim. If someone is pulled into the cactus, he takes 2d4 + AC points of damage per round thereafter.

When the first PC approaches the cacti, allow him a surprise roll. If he is not surprised, tell him that the needles seem to be moving, and some of them are pointing at him. If he immediately moves backward, a Dexterity check allows him to get out of range just as the needles fire.

This is a simple trap encounter; as long as the PCs stay back out of the needles' reach (15'), they cannot be harmed. If they destroy the cacti with missile weapons, they also lose the water inside.

There are two methods for getting at the water that would work very well. One is to use a *fireball* from the *wand* on the cacti; this fires all of the needles. Have the PC roll the damage for the fireball. If the damage is 30 or less, all of the needles are gone, while the water still remains. If it is more than 30, only the plants that make a saving throw (16 or better) still retain their water. The second method that might save the water is riskier: Someone could dart into range, attempting to jump back in time to get out of the way of the needles. To make matters very simple, a Dexterity check should allow the PC to get out of range. Rather than make each plant fire its needles separately (a total of 64 Dexterity checks!), assume that most of the plants fire at the same individual. A total of 10 Dexterity checks would exhaust the plants. Of course, this means that a failed check causes the PC to be subject to at least 16 or 24 attacks. Eldath's *magic missiles* also might be able to kill a plant with no loss of water.



Each cactus can be tapped for one gallon of water. If the PCs are traveling at dusk and dawn, this is almost enough for two days. This allows them to make it to the mountains, where they can find more water.

You have finally reached Mount K'lir. You approach the hidden village, but are stopped at the gate. A broad tall man, a mul, comes out to meet you. The village is well hidden. You have the uncomfortable feeling of being watched.

Slave Village

The PCs are met by the village leader, Kaftan, a former gladiator himself. He is not pleased with the party, because they have led a group of templars straight to the village. The party has two choices: They can turn around and surrender to the templars, so that the templars do not continue on to the village, or they can wipe out the pursuers, keeping the secret of the village. Kaftan is adamant; the only other choice is for the villagers to kill all the PCs and leave the bodies as though some monster had killed them. This is very harsh, but the world is a harsh one, and the village cannot afford mercy.

Kaftan, village leader: AL N; AC 0; MV 24; HD 14 (mul gladiator 14th level); hp 131; THAC0 3; #AT 5/2; D 1d8+10. He wears *leather armor +3* and carries a rusty metal long sword. He has a Strength and Constitution of 20 and a Dexterity of 18.

Kaftan used to be well known among gladiators, and has been the leader of the village for over two years. He will not risk the village's existence for six PCs. He hopes that they can win, for their skills would be valuable. He would even be glad to see a mage enter, for they only have one preserver mage in the village, and while that mage is very powerful, he is also old.

Kaftan reports that one of their psionicists has been watching the party for the last day, and has also spotted the pursuers. The templars are only about four hours behind the PCs. They have

10 guards, five templars, and a defiler. (There were more, but the chase has taken a toll on the pursuers.) He offers water, food, and weapons to those who need them. He really wants the PCs to join the village, but they must prove themselves first, and he won't ask any of his villagers to risk themselves for strangers.

This is a no-choice situation. There is plenty of reason for the PCs to fight. If the party agrees, they are given food and water and replacements for any weapons they need. (Melee weapons are made of bone, and are -1 to hit and damage.) Should anyone be wounded, a priest of earth comes out and heals them. No magic is available; the villagers do not want to risk losing irreplaceable magic items in case the PCs are defeated.

If and when the PCs agree to fight the templars, they must backtrack to find a suitable ambush location. A high-walled passage can be located. This allows space for the PCs to set up for missile fire or spellcasting. Several large boulders are present to allow the gladiators to hide behind them, and then charge.

Guards (9): AL LE; AC 4; MV 24; HD 5; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 3/2 or 2, D 1d8+2 or 1d6-1.

The guards are carrying bone long swords, with which they are specialized. They wear hide armor, and use leather shields. They all have short bows with 20 bone-tipped arrows. Each has a Strength of 17 and a Dexterity of 15.

Templars (4): AL LE; AC 1; MV 24; HD 7; hp 29; THAC0 17; #AT 1; D 1d6+1 (bone shortswords + Str bonus); SA spells; SD spells. These templars have hide armor and leather shields; each has a Strength of 16, Dexterity of 17, and Wisdom of 16. Spells memorized: *command, cure light wounds, cause light wounds, hold person* (x2), *silence 15' radius, spiritual hammer, dispel magic, create food and water.*

Guard Captain: AL LE; AC 0; MV 24; HD 10; hp 100; THAC0 7; #AT 2; D 1d8+10. The captain wields a bone long sword +1, wears *hide armor +2* and carries a *leather shield +1*. He also has a *longbow +1* and 20 bone-tipped arrows. He has a Strength of 20 and a Dexterity of 16. He carries an apple of speed, which he will eat in the first round of combat.

Templar Leader: AL LE; AC 1; MV 24; HD 11; hp 49; THAC0 14; #AT 1; D 1d6+2 (metal mace + Str bonus); SA spells; SD spells. The head templar is equipped with hide armor and a leather shield. He has a Strength of 18, Dexterity of 17, and Wisdom of 18. Spells: *command, cure light wounds, cause light wounds, hold person* (x2), *silence 15' radius, spiritual hammer, dispel magic, create food and water, paralysis* (reversed *remove paralysis*), *cause serious wounds, flame strike.*

Defiler Mage: AL LE; AC 9; MV 24; HD 10; hp 24; THAC0 19; #AT 1; D 1d4+1 (obsidian dagger +1); SA spells; SD spells. The defiler cast a *stoneskin* yesterday, and takes no damage from the first eight attacks against him.

He carries a *wand of lightning bolts* with 12 charges, and a scroll with *hold monster* (for use on the thri-kreen and half-giant), and *fireball* at 10th level. Spells memorized: *magic missile* (x2), *burning hands, detect psionics, detect invisibility, Melf's acid arrow, spectral hand, web, hold person, flame arrow, vampiric touch, improved invisibility, dimension door, cone of cold* (x2).

The agents of the sorcerer-king are not stupid. If the PCs have chosen the good ambush spot, the heroes get one free round of attacks. After this, the guards run for boulders and return fire. The captain also takes cover and eats his *apple of speed*. The defiler turns invisible, and then uses *dimension door* to move up to where the PCs are firing, preparing to use his hold spells or his wand, whichever seems more appropriate. The templar leader brings down a flame strike on anyone he can see, and then moves to cover. The rest of the templars try to take cover so that they can use their hold spells or their *spiritual hammers*. The party must be swift to have a chance here. Of course, a *fireball* in the middle of the guards, coupled with a number of missile attacks, can bring down a majority of the guards immediately. Remember that any PC behind a boulder has at least partial cover, giving him a -4 bonus to AC. This applies to PCs as well as guards.

Assuming the PCs set up their ambush with intelligence, they should not have any problem with the enemy forces.

If they do have trouble, and the battle is going badly, they get some unexpected help. Just when things seem at their worst, any held PCs find that they can move again. (The old mage from the village, while invisible, cast *dispel magic*). In addition, Kaftan charges down the trail screaming and attacks as though berserk. (He's not, but he gives a very good impression of it.) The old mage then uses his four *magic missile* spells where they will do the most good. This additional help should allow the PCs to carry the battle.

After the leaders (guard captain, templar leader and defiler) are slain, the rest try to flee. They don't get far before crossbow bolts cut them down. When it is over, Kaftan admits that he couldn't pass up the chance for one more shot at those "dirty slavers."

The old mage, Cerulan, says he needed a new pupil, and he never liked defilers anyway. The PCs are welcomed into the village. Life is rosy, at least as rosy as it can get on Athas. ❑

Templars Of Tyr

New Villains To Pester Your PCs

by Tina Brown and Carlo Anziano

Many of the people of Tyr believe that their existence would be much more pleasant if they didn't have to put up with their own brand of templars every day. Many long to live under the watchful eye of the sorcerer-queen Lalali-Puy along the forest ridge, or dream of being able to elect their own templars, as they do in the city-state of Draj. Those other places seem much more civilized than corrupt old Tyr.

But is this really the case? Would the citizens of Tyr be much better off anywhere else? Decide for yourself by reading the following descriptions of six templars, one representative from each of the other city-states.

Balic

Rutillia Accipiter
6th Level Female Human Templar

STR: 16
DEX: 19
CON: 13
INT: 13
WIS: 16
CHA: 12

AC: 3
Hit Points: 30
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Languages: Common, Elvish
THAC0: 17
Age: 32
Height: 5'6"
Weight: 139
Hair/Eyes: Red/Hazel

Weapon Proficiencies: Chain whip, dagger, widow's knife (from DRAGON® Magazine #185)
Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Read/write Common (16), bureauracy (10), heat protection (11), reading lips (13), psionic detection (14), direction sense (13), sign language (19)

Magic Items: *Steel dagger +1, elixir of youth* (grapefruit), *potion of speed* (plum)
Equipment: Flint-tipped spear, bone cahulaks, erdlu scale breastplate, two erdlu scale leg greaves, cream-colored chiton (body-length pleated shirt), finely striped chlamys (short cloak), leather girdle, silver bangle, 1 lb. bag of salt, one-pound bag of sun-dried olives, one bloodstone (20 gp), one chunk of smoky quartz (15 gp)
Psionic Wild Talent: Molecular agitation
PSPs: 35
Spells: 3/4/1

Rutillia is tall and well muscled, with long, flowing red hair contrasting sharply with her pale complexion. She carries herself proudly and gracefully, though her quick temper and flashing hazel eyes often betray the shrewish nature common to all women of the noble house of Accipiter.

Rutillia has the job of gate monitor within the city-state of Balic. This brings her into contact with the many different cultures that abound in the Tyr region, as people come and go through the great caravan gates of Balic, seeking lawful trade or underhand dealings. Even though she considers this duty beneath her, she takes advantage of the opportunity to turn a quick profit.

She is currently involved in a long-running feud with Arcus, one of the city tax collectors, who suspects her of illegally collecting entry fees from travelers new to the city. Thus far she has managed to avoid all of Arcus's traps and spies, but it is only a matter of time before she is caught and punished.

Draj

Dacotixlan Octo, Moon Priest
6th Level Male Human Templar

STR: 10
DEX: 13
CON: 18
INT: 14
WIS: 19
CHA: 12

AC: 7
Hit Points: 29
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarvish
THAC0: 18
Age: 32
Height: 5'11"
Weight: 185
Hair/Eyes: Dark Brown/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, harpoon, master's whip

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Bargain (12), heat protection (15), sign language (13), read/write Common (17), read/write Elvish (17), astrology (17), water find (19)

Magic Items: *Steel long sword +2*, *philter of glibness* (mango), *oil of impact* (lime)
Equipment: bone harpoon, bone master's whip, , studded leather breastplate, two studded leather arm guards, medium shield, loose robes, ornate hat with two moons on brow, waterskin containing 3/4 pint of pulque (fermented cactus juice), one pearl (350 gp), one moonstone (55 gp), one topaz (20 gp)
Wild Psionic Talent: Shadow form
PSPs: 36
Spells/Day: 5/4/1

Dacotixlan is clean-shaven with burnished copper skin, long dark hair, and melting brown eyes. But don't let the smooth good looks fool you. This is an elf with iron willpower, who keeps his head when under presure and is always looking out for himself. He endeavors to make a profit from every undertaking.

Dacotixlan is responsible for slave control within the city-state of Draj, distributing the slaves among the endless hemp and grain fields that form an integral part of Draji economy. Every month, Dacotixlan spends ten days overseeing a group of slaves detailed to polish the filigree copper tracery that decorates the Golden Moon Gate—a huge affair of agafari wood inlaid with obsidian that is the only entrance to the city. In this duty, the Moon Priest uses his master's whip to discourage any thoughts that the slaves might harbor for stealing the coins.

Gulg

Fronti-Marr
5th Level Male Half-Elf Templar

STR: 12
DEX: 17
CON: 15
INT: 18
WIS: 17
CHA: 10

AC: 6
Hit Points: 30
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
Languages: Common, Elvish
THAC0: 18
Age: 36
Height: 5'8"
Weight: 141
Hair/Eyes: Black/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Long bow, dagger, tortoise blade
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Survival (forest) (18), bargain (15), psionic detection (15), herbalism (16), artistic ability (bone carving) (18), tumbling (17), read/write Common (21), read/write Elvish (21), set snares (17)

Magic Items: *Potion of extra healing* (orange), *ring of free action*
Equipment: Long bow, bone dagger, steel tortoise blade, one-pound bag of nuts, brightly colored skirts.
Animal Companion: Sand cat (Tiss)
Psionic Wild Talent: Body weaponry
PSPs: 33
Spells/Day: 5/4

Fronti-Mar is a tall, lean, long-limbed templar with an angular face, oval eyes, and a long neck. He is almost always seen accompanied by a tawny, yellow-eyed sand cat called Tiss.

Fronti-Marr is one of the templars in charge of grain distribution throughout the city-state of Gulg. He is quite well respected for his fairness and equality. Fronti-Marr has risen quickly through the templar ranks in Gulg and wears no fewer than six necklaces of rank. Considering that the highest-ranking templar wears only ten, Fronti-Marr is certainly expected to take one of the positions of power within the next few years.

Nibenay

Kheroum Tashery
7th Level Female Half-Elf Templar

STR: 11
DEX: 19
CON: 18
INT: 16
WIS: 15
CHA: 16

AC: 3
Hit Points: 36
Alignment: Lawful Evil
Languages: Common, Elvish
THAC0: 16
Age: 34
Height: 5'5"
Weight: 125
Hair/Eyes: Black/Green

Weapon Proficiencies: Spear, short sword, widow's knife
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Survival (rocky badlands) (16), read/write Common (19), read/write Elvish (19), bargain (13), bureaucracy (14), heat protection (14), psionic detection (14), weapon improvisation (11), dancing (19), forgery (19)

Magic Items: *Bracers of defense AC3, scarab of death, ring of invisibility*
Equipment: obsidian spear, bone short sword, steel widow's knife, one-pound bag of cooked rice, ornate copper necklace, loose yellow silk robes, krama (long head scarf with small, checkered pattern), ruby (2,000 gp), fire opal (1,000), amber (70 gp)
Animal Companion: Rattlesnake (Nedjmet)
Psionic Wild Talent: Catfall
PSPs: 20
Spells/Day: 5/3/2

Kheroum is a tall, willowy half-elf with shoulder-length black hair that is usually braided and decorated with porcelain beads in green, blue, and cyan. One of the first things a stranger notices about her is the startling green of her large eyes, easily visible behind long black eyelashes.

Kheroum is noted among her peers for her enjoyment of the suffering of others. Since only females are able to become templars in Nibenay, she relishes the power that she has over the "inferior" males. She flaunts her beauty and her lack of armor incessantly, knowing that she is protected by the Shadow King's law (and by her bracers).

Kheroum is always accompanied by a diamond-backed rattlesnake called Nedjemet, who rests coiled about her mistress's waist or neck. Nedjmet can easily sense when her mistress is upset with someone and has often used her venomous fangs to aid in Kheroum's private political maneuverings.

Kheroum is one of the many tax collectors in Nibenay and frequently uses her *ring of invisibility* to spy on the nobles of the city, collecting information about their works and lifestyles so that she can demand surprisingly accurate tithes for her King.

Raam

Jaswinder Paurl
5th Level Female Dwarf Templar

STR: 20
DEX: 13
CON: 18
INT: 10
WIS: 17
CHA: 10

AC: 8
Hit Points: 32
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Languages: Common, Dwarvish
THAC0: 17
Age: 45
Height: 4'6"
Weight: 125
Hair/Eyes: Bald/Dark blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Flail, spear, dagger
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Read/write Dwarvish (13), read/write Common (13), bargain (15), rope use (13), musical instrument (lute) (12), heat protection (8)

Magic Items: *Ring of shocking grasp, periapt of wound closure*
Equipment: Bone-spiked flail, flint-tipped spear, bone dagger, leather breastplate, silver jewelry, lute, eye agate (25 gp), lump of onyx (12 gp)
Psionic Wild Talent: All-around vision
PSPs: 30
Spells/Day: 5/4

Jaswinder appears to be the archetypical tough dwarven female: stocky and well muscled, with copper-colored skin and wide, angular features. She has a long nose that has been broken and reset several times. Large blue eyes dominate her square face. She always wears some sort of headgear, favoring a toothed leather circlet and three or four mismatched metal earrings.

As part of the mansabdar (the corrupt public police force), Jaswinder revels in her

position of authority over the lower castes. She is a grudge-holding assigner of permits in the city-state of Raam, and anyone who crosses her path had better wait for her to be off duty before they start applying for permission to leave the city, whether on trade or personal business.

As a templar, Jaswinder is part of the vizier caste within the city and will have the ear of the sorcerer-queen as she progresses through the templar hierarchy. She plays the lute exceptionally well and has, at times, found favor with Abalach-Re by strumming a mournful tune for her while she dines. This has allowed her to rise through the ranks more quickly than usual, and she is ever watchful for the possibility of a higher-ranking templar finding her too ambitious for comfort.

At home, Jaswinder enjoys wearing loose silken robes of magenta and fuchsia. These are supplied to her, as a member of the vizier caste, from Abalach-Re's prized silk wyrms. Since she enjoys the feel of silk so much, Jaswinder is ever mindful of the silk wyrms' diet and will use any excuse to keep the creatures well fed on a steady diet of slaves, prisoners, and troublemakers.

Urik

Baloban-dur-hat
7th Level Male Human Templar

STR: 19
DEX: 18
CON: 14
INT: 15
WIS: 17
CHA: 10

AC: 2
Hit Points: 33
Alignment: Chaotic Evil
Languages: Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Halfling
THAC0: 15
Age: 37
Height: 5'10"
Weight: 168
Hair/Eyes: Chestnut/Olive

Weapon proficiencies: Long sword, spear, long bow
Nonweapon proficiencies: Read/write Common (18), psionic detection (15), land-based riding , kank (15), heat protection (13), bargain (16), dance (19)
Magic Items: *Potion of hum-an control* (black cherry), *potion of vitality* (apple)
Equipment: Large bone long sword, obsidian-headed spear, long bow, hide armor, medium agafari wood shield, sapphire (1,000 gp), aquamarine (500 gp)
Psionic Wild Talent: Danger sense
PSPs: 32
Spells: 5/4/3

Baloban is a formidable-looking Templar.

He wears a short Mohican hairstyle, in contrast to the square-cut ringlets of the citizens, to show off the tattoos that cover the sides of his head. He is lean and athletic, moving with the practiced ease and grace of an accomplished warrior.

Baloban is one of the many Templars responsible for riot control in Urik. As such, he uses his wild talent for sensing danger to the full. He has a *potion of human control* but, luckily, has not yet had to use it. Among the many trade goods offered in Urik are finely crafted and engraved ceramic pots and urns. These are fired and kilned during the cool of evening in the fabulous Potter's Court. Pots made here are held in great esteem throughout Athas. Baloban frequently strolls through the Potter's Court on the pretense of watching for bands of troublemakers or thieves.

He makes a point of inspecting each stall and kiln and will pass by only upon receipt of a crimson firepot or emerald-glazed bowl. Baloban makes a tidy profit from selling his bribes to foreign merchants.

He keeps up with his warrior training in his spare time and enjoys practicing swordplay and archery. When off duty, he likes to wrestle and play the popular hoop-rolling game, pichut.

Baloban is an enthusiastic follower of Hamanu's Code. There are only two parts to that code: loyalty and talion. Loyalty means blind obedience to King Hamanu and his templars; talion means "punishment in kind," and Baloban revels in finding tortuous ways to ensure that thieves and blasphemers understand exactly what will happen to them if he catches them.

When not wearing his armor, Baloban wears a short-sleeved white linen shirt that falls to ankle length and is tied at the waist with a tasseled girdle. He portrays his high rank by wearing a short white unfringed cloak, since only templars are allowed to wear one in the street without courting the anger of Hamanu. ❑

Lightsabers

And The Force in the *Star Wars* New Republic

by Bill Slavicsek and Michele Carter

In the Star Wars mythos, much is made of a Jedi's "elegant weapon from a more civilized time"—the lightsaber.

However, the lightsaber is far more than simply a weapon for cleaving the limbs off enemies. It's a symbol, a glowing testament to the honor and courage of the Jedi Knighthood. Beings the galaxy over recognize the bearer of a lightsaber as someone of great wisdom and honesty, as a protector, or as a formidable opponent. Not every planetary culture or alien species respects what the Jedi stand for, but most respect the symbol they carry.

Lightsabers are rare. Rarer still are those who can wield them with skill. Han Solo was able to flip on Luke's lightsaber and slice open a dead tauntaun, but he could never block blaster bolts with it and would never even think to try.

More than a few foolhardy souls have taken up the lightsaber in battle only to cause more harm to themselves than to their enemies. To use a lightsaber properly, one must be able to sense and manipulate the Force. So, the greater the Force skills of a Jedi, the greater his or her skills with the lightsaber.

In *Return of the Jedi*, Darth Vader takes a moment to examine the lightsaber Luke built in the Tatooine wilderness.

Vader displays satisfaction and admiration upon inspecting Luke's weapon. "I see you have constructed a new lightsaber," Vader says, turning it over in his gloved hands. "Your skills are complete. Indeed, you are powerful, as the Emperor has foreseen."

It is evident from this scene that the Jedi put a great deal of value into the crafting of a lightsaber. *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game Second Edition* discusses this, but no game mechanics are given for this important part of the Jedi training process.

We'll rectify that in this article and touch on a few other Force issues as well.

What is a Lightsaber?

A lightsaber is a tubular device composed of a hand grip, a number of controls, and a small concave dish on one end. An internal power supply discharges energy through a series of internal crystals. These crystals intensify and focus the energy before it is projected from the concave dish. The resulting beam of energy becomes the saber's glowing blade—a blade capable of cutting through even the hardest materials.

By current galactic standards, the lightsaber is an archaic weapon. To those skilled in its use, the lightsaber is not "as clumsy or as random as a blaster."

In the hands of a skilled Jedi, with the Force at his side, the lightsaber can deflect blaster bolts, slice through other melee weapons, and cut a devastating path through scores of opponents.

The lightsaber is easily recognized by its blade of intense visible energy and the powerful hum it produces when switched on.

Lightsaber Construction

Any Force-using character can find an old lightsaber and a teacher to train in its use—if a gamemaster is generous. It is the Jedi character who excels with a lightsaber, however, using it as weapon and glowing symbol to cut through the oppressive darkness of evil. The ultimate test of a Jedi's skill is the actual crafting of a lightsaber, and this is not a task to be tried by those who are new to the mysteries of the Force.

Building a lightsaber is one of the final tests a young Jedi student must pass before earning the title of Jedi Knight. Not only does the exercise demonstrate a student's knowledge of lightsaber mechanics, it also tests his or her strength of will, determination, and harmony with the Force. Building a lightsaber is an indication of a student's discipline and devotion. It's as much a ritual as a mechanical undertaking. Whether or not the crafter uses the lightsaber he or she builds is irrelevant (and there are those who build a lightsaber to carry as a symbol, not wield as a weapon). The test is in the crafting.

Some students look to the examples of Yoda and Emperor Palpatine when their teachers tell them the time of the test has arrived. They point out that the most experienced Force-users don't bother with lightsabers. However, would-be Jedi should not take these examples as an indication that they can skip over this part of their training.

The crafting process teaches them more than just how to build a structure of wires and crystals, and the skills required to wield a lightsaber involve far more than simple combat. To skillfully use a lightsaber is to immerse oneself in the ebb and flow of the Force. To build one from scratch is to become one with the Force and demonstrate true harmony.

The process is very personal and very solitary. The student must remove himself from all distractions, usually by heading out into a remote area. Luke went into the Tatooine wastelands to craft his lightsaber. R2-D2 accompanied him on his lonely quest, but the droid was only there to offer support and companionship—not to assist in any way.

The crafting must be done by the Jedi alone, or the process will not be pure and complete. The time necessary for constructing a lightsaber averages about one month for most students. This includes the time needed to gather the materials, craft them, and meditate on the entire process. It is rumored that during the Clone Wars, experienced Jedi were able to build lightsabers in as little as two days. Luke built his in less than a week, while Princess Leia constructed hers in eight days.

Students who fail their first attempt at constructing a lightsaber need not despair. It is common for Jedi-in-training to make two or even three attempts before getting all of the steps right.

Whether it's a matter of a certain lack of control or confidence in him- or herself, or simply a deficiency in the technical aspects of lightsaber construction, a fledgling Jedi can always try again.

Star Wars is ®, ™, and © 1994 Lucasfilm, Ltd. (LFL) All Rights Reserved.

The ornamentation used on the handle and even the color of the lightsaber's energy blade is entirely the crafter's choice. There are certain features common to all lightsabers, however. These are the hand grip itself, the activator and lock-on switches, the flashback suppressor, the beam projector, the blade length control, and the power cell release.

Game Mechanics

Before a Force-user can attempt to construct a lightsaber, he or she must meet the following requirements. First, the Force-user must have at least 2D in the Control and Sense skills, and at least 1D in Alter. The Force-user must also know the *lightsaber combat* and *sense Force* powers. Finally, the Force-user must have spent some time improving the new Technical skill, *lightsaber repair* (described later in this article). From the time the character learns the skill, he or she must have improved it by 1D (three pips, one pip increase per adventure as per the standard skill improvement rules), and this additional die may not be one of the character's original allotment of seven skill dice.

In other words, characters must go through at least three adventures before they may attempt to construct a lightsaber. They can still use the skill to repair one at any time (see the skill description below).

When a student is ready, he or she goes into the wilderness alone. During the process, the student must fast and meditate on the meaning of the Jedi Code. The student is permitted no supplies save the clothes he is wearing and a lightsaber tool kit (if his teacher is kind enough to provide one).

If no tool kit is available, then the process takes longer (read all results as one difficulty level lower). To determine the length of the process, the student rolls his *lightsaber repair* skill, adding his Sense skill to the roll, and finding the result on the table below. The repair portion of the roll represents the Force-user's technical skill, while the Sense portion represents his connection to the selected area.

The GM is given a range of time for storytelling purposes and to gauge more accurately the result of the roll. So, if the student rolls in the low range of Moderate, use the longer length of time.

Lightsaber Repair + Sense Roll	**Length of Process**
Very Easy	Process Fails
Easy	Process Fails
Moderate	Two–Four Weeks
Difficult	One–Two Weeks
Very Difficult	Two Days–One Week
Heroic	Two Days

Example: If Fahjay decides to craft a lightsaber using an existing tool kit, he makes a roll. His lightsaber repair is 3D+1. His Sense is 2D+1. He rolls a total of 5D+2, getting a 23—a Very Difficult result! He crafts his lightsaber in one week. (One week because his roll was in the low end of the Very Difficult range. If he didn't have a tool kit, the added time to craft his own tools would bump the total to two weeks (one level lower, or a Difficult result).

Making the length roll doesn't guarantee success at constructing the lightsaber. It simply sets an amount of time to the process and determines whether the Force-user can find and gather the needed materials. By the end of this period, the student has either succeeded or realized that he has failed this time out. A result of "Process Fails" at this point indicates that the materials can't be found or that they're inadequate or flawed in some way, or even that the student can't properly attune himself to the Force at the current time.

The raw materials must be crafted and assembled into a tubular casing, wiring, circuitry, power cells, lenses, and crystals. The Force-user must make a Control roll to maintain his personal connection to the Force and to keep to his fast. The difficulty of the roll is based on the length of the process, as shown on the table below.

Control Roll	**Length of Process**
Very Easy	Process Fails
Easy	Two Days
Moderate	Two Days–One Week
Difficult	One–Two Weeks
Very Difficult	Two–Four Weeks

Example: Fahjay has a Control skill of 3D. He needs to make a Moderate Control roll based on the overall length of the process (as determined by his earlier *lightsaber repair* + Sense roll. A success indicates that the process proceeds smoothly. A failure indicates that the Force-user cannot maintain the necessary concentration and the process fails.

After all of the materials have been gathered and crafted, the Force-user must actually prepare and shape the crystals through which the saber's energy will flow. The crystals amplify the energy, giving the light blade its cutting edge. To prepare and shape the crystals requires an Alter roll, with the success level determining how long the crystals will last with regular use before they burn out and need to be replaced.

Alter Roll	**Life of Crystals**
Very Easy	Process Fails
Easy	One Month
Moderate	Six Months
Difficult	One Year
Very Difficult	Two Years
Heroic	Ten Years

Example: Fahjay has an Alter skill of 1D+2. He rolls a 6 for an Easy success. This means the crystals he has shaped and prepared will perform through one month of regular use before they burn out. (Burned-out crystals must be replaced using *lightsaber repair* and Alter, as described below.)

Finally, after all of the Force skill rolls have been made, the student has one last task to accomplish before his lightsaber is ready for use. He must assemble all of the pieces. This requires a Moderate *lightsaber repair* roll. Success indicates that the student completes a working lightsaber in the amount of time determined above. Failure indicates that something went wrong somewhere, and the lightsaber will not function.

No matter at what point in the process a failure was indicated, the student must spend the determined amount of time working on the lightsaber. If the student decides to try again, he must start over from the beginning—none of the components or materials created during a failed attempt may be used for any purpose as they are flawed beyond the point of salvage or repair. Note that character points can be spent on any of these rolls (up to two on each roll), but not Force points. If a student fails at the process, he or she must wait at least one month before attempting to enter into the med-

itative state again. During this period, the student must regain strength, meditate on what went wrong, and continue his or her training.

The student must improve at least two of the necessary skills by one pip (these being *lightsaber repair*, Control, Sense, and Alter). The amount of time needed to recuperate can be shortened by spending Force points (though it will be an extreme case to suggest this is a proper use of Force points). One Force point will cut the recuperation time by one week.

When Lightsabers Clash

Using a lightsaber in battle can be very tricky. Unlike a regular sword, the lightsaber's blade has no weight.

To use it with any certainty requires the Sense skill, for without this ability the wielder has no point of reference beyond what his eyes tell him. When dealing with something that can slice through most anything, a bit more precision is required.

A nonForce-user makes a melee combat or *lightsaber* skill roll to wield a lightsaber. This roll is made at the start of combat, and requires a Difficult skill roll. If the character misses the difficulty roll by 10 or more points, he has injured himself with the weapon. Roll normal damage to determine the extent of the injury.

A Force-user can employ the *lightsaber combat* Force power to add to her effectiveness with the weapon. Successful use of the power allows the Force-user to add her Sense dice to her *lightsaber* skill dice when making the difficulty roll.

If the power was not used successfully, then only the skill dice apply. When the lightsaber hits, it causes 5D damage (plus Control dice if the lightsaber combat power is in effect).

When two lightsaber-wielding opponents meet in battle, additional rules apply. If the opponents simply hack and slash at each other, they roll to hit and then roll damage.

If one or the other decides to parry a blow, then rolls must be made to determine what happens to each lightsaber when the blades come into contact. As in the movies, when two lightsaber blades touch, the resulting discharge of energy can cause one or both to sputter and lose power.

When the glowing blades clash, make opposed Control rolls. The loser of the opposed roll applies the number of points he lost the roll by to the table below, then checks the result.

Difference of Loser's Roll and Result to Loser's Lightsaber

- **Very Easy (1-5):** No effect (except cool noises and flashes)
- **Easy (6-10):** –1D to damage code (next round only)
- **Moderate (11-15):** –2D to damage (permanent)
- **Difficult (16-20):** –3D to damage (permanent)
- **Very Difficult (20-30):** –4D to damage (permanent)
- **Heroic (31+):** –5D to damage (permanent)

Opposed Control rolls must be made every time a lightsaber parries another lightsaber. Conceivably, both opponents could be down damage dice the next round if they parried each other's attack.

A difference of Easy causes a reduction in power that lasts only one round. A difference of Moderate or greater indicates actual damage to the lightsaber that is permanent until the weapon's owner makes a *lightsaber repair* roll to fix it. Note that even if the difference reaches Heroic level, a Force-user's Control dice are still added to the total damage roll for the duration of the battle (if he or she has the *lightsaber combat* Force skill active).

Damage inflicted on a lightsaber blade by another lightsaber blade is cumulative. If Kimry's blade was reduced by 2D last round and 2D this round, then the blade's damage would be at –4D. A lightsaber can continue to function even after sustaining Heroic damage (–5D), either as a result of a single discharge or after the cumulative effects of many discharges. At the end of the round in which a lightsaber is reduced to –6D, it sputters and dies. It has burned out and can't be used again until repairs are made and the crystals are replaced.

Example: Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader engage in a lightsaber duel aboard the first Death Star. Vader swings at Kenobi, who parries the blow. Vader has 11 dice in Control, and rolls a 45. Obi-Wan has 12 dice in Control, and rolls a 39. Obi-Wan loses the opposed roll by 6—an Easy result. Obi-Wan's lightsaber is down 1D of damage next round.

Lightsaber Repair

Lightsaber repair is a Technical skill. Any character can learn the skill, provided players and game masters can come up with a logical story element to explain how the knowledge was gained. The skill has two functions. A Force-user can employ it to craft a lightsaber from scratch, as explained above. Second, the skill can be used to repair a damaged lightsaber.

Time Taken: To construct a lightsaber, the time necessary is determined by a combined *lightsaber repair* + Sense roll. To repair a lightsaber, the time is based on the difficulty level of the damage: Very Easy, 15 minutes; Easy, one hour; Moderate, six hours; Difficult, 12 hours; Very Difficult, 24 hours; Heroic, 48 hours. A destroyed lightsaber can't be repaired. If new crystals must be shaped, Alter rolls will also be necessary.

Simple repairs to a lightsaber can be made anywhere, provided the repairer has the proper tools (crafted by the repairer as part of the lightsaber construction process, or given by a skilled Force-user). Simple repairs include any damage that does not require the shaping of new crystals. If new crystals must be shaped, either because the crystals burned out with normal use or received Very Difficult damage or greater (–4D or more) in a lightsaber clash, then the process is more difficult. The repairer must go into the wilderness to find, prepare, and shape new crystals.

This requires a *lightsaber repair* roll as described above, and an Alter roll to determine the life of the new crystals (see the rules on construction, above).

Lightsabers can't be altered or improved to cause more damage. If new components are needed, additional Force skill rolls may be called for according to the construction process, as determined by the game master.

The Force in the Game

First, some definitions. *NonForce-sensitives* are characters who can't sense or manipulate the Force. Most characters fall into this category.

Force-sensitives are characters who can sense the Force, but can't (or don't) access the abilities. They simply don't know that they're different, haven't been trained, or don't want to deal with the hassles. They are more susceptible

to the seduction of the dark side of the Force than others.

Force-users are Force-sensitive characters who have learned to use Force powers. Some are good, some evil, some fall in between. Jedi are a specific group of Force-users who have a distinct code that dictates how their abilities are to be used. Dark Jedi are Jedi who have been seduced by the dark side. Not all evil Force-users are Dark Jedi, nor all good Force-users Jedi. Aliens and independents may have their own codes, and may see the Force in entirely different ways.

The Force is one of the wonders and perhaps the greatest "toy" of the Star Wars universe. Sometimes, though, it seems that nonForce-sensitive characters get a bit lost in the shuffle. After all, how much fun is it to just shoot things when your pal the Jedi is flinging opponents around with a look, or deflecting blaster bolts with the swing of a lightsaber? Even worse, the Jedi always has Force-using enemies (after all, they're the ones who can really give a Jedi a workout) to deal with, and "normal" characters usually have to run for cover when the Force lightning starts to fly. They have no defense against it and can't fight it—or so it seems.

Once characters have gotten to a certain level of skill, the differences between Force-users and nonForce-users become more distinct. A character with 4D of Control has powers and abilities that far outweigh her friend's 4D in blaster, or computers, or piloting. Here are some tips for the gamemaster to balance things in a campaign.

1. Jedi aren't infallible, and they can't be everywhere. Force-users can be distracted, overwhelmed, and taken by surprise. We've seen Luke Skywalker incapacitated by sneak attacks—a common blow to the head from out of his line of sight (by a Wampa ice creature), and captured in an Ewok net trap, for example—because he wasn't paying attention. A Force-user can't be in combat readiness all the time. In other words, don't let player character Jedi walk around with danger sense always on. Similarly, a Force-user can be overwhelmed by hordes of attackers, or simply separated from the rest of the party through various means. There are always ways to ensure that the other characters get a piece of the action in any adventure. Everyone should get a chance to shine. Another game-breaker is the emptiness power. Early in a campaign, let Force-users make use of this talent to balance things out. But once Force-users become powerful, restrict its use by making a planet adventure take more than one day. Don't let a Jedi walk around in constant emptiness.

This applies to the bad guys, too. Just because that evil Force-user has lots of powers ordinary characters can't fight head on doesn't mean he's invincible. Blasters can still hit him, vibroblades can still cut him, and a well-set thermal detonator can cause a spectacular amount of damage. And remember: NonForce-sensitives have Force points, too!

2. Not all dilemmas can be solved with the Force; or, Lightsabers can't cut through everything. Ethical, moral, technical, mechanical, personal, and many other kinds of problems can't be solved using Force abilities. So the Jedi has a habit of carving up bunches of enemies with a single swipe of his lightsaber, or sneaking his companions past patrols and guards. But can he hotwire a landspeeder? Reprogram a computer? Does he speak a dozen languages, and know the customs of a dozen more species? Usually, the player of a Jedi character spends all of the character's hard-won character points on Force skills. NonForce-sensitives spend the same points on many different skills, and often have more varied talents because of that. It's up to the gamemaster to produce scenarios and situations that require solutions other than slicing and dicing opponents, or manipulating the Force.

3. The Force can be countered. Whether it's a stronger, nastier Force-user, or creatures like the ysalamiri that completely inhibit the Force (as described in Timothy Zahn's *Star Wars* novel trilogy), there's always something out there that can give a Force-user grief. Other possibilities: creatures drawn toward powerful disturbances in the Force, mercs trained to combat Force-users, droids built to battle Jedi, and substances that temporarily block a Jedi's connection to the Force. All of these can be used creatively to make exciting stories—but don't use them to simply punish a powerful PC.

4. Remember the Jedi Code. Like paladins in the AD&D® game, Jedi are restricted by the code they follow to certain standards of ethical behavior. Unfortunately for them, their enemies aren't . . . and neither are their non-Force-sensitive teammates. This can lead to all kinds of group dynamics. And, if a Jedi PC likes to play fast and loose with the code, pile on the dark side points. Eventually she'll straighten up and fly right, or she'll become a dark side NPC who'll probably make all kinds of trouble for her old companions.

5. Force-users are rare. Only a handful of people in any given star system are likely to be Force-sensitive, never mind actual Force-users. That means mentors who can teach the player character Jedi are correspondingly rare as well. Unless a Force-user has an "in" with Luke Skywalker (who, depending on the time the campaign is set, may not have the time or confidence to teach someone anyway), he may have a long and frustrating search for a teacher. This allows the game master to dictate how fast a Force-user can advance.

6. Normal characters have abilities, too. Just as stormtroopers are un-naturally weak-minded, some PCs seem to have natural resistances to the Force. Remember Jabba the Hutt? It's been speculated that his resistance to "Jedi mind tricks" was the result of his alien biology, but there's a flaw in that thinking; the Force is all-pervasive and encompasses all people and species. (Although the existence of the ysalamiri is a seeming contradiction to this, that's a debate for another time.) It can be speculated that Jabba simply is extremely strong willed: and player characters can be, too.

For those (like us) who feel that non-Force-users need a way to defend themselves against Force-users, we offer this optional rule. In the current game mechanics, many Force powers are defended against by a nonForce-user's Perception. For this reason, the willpower skill should be moved from being a Knowledge skill to a Perception skill. Any Force power that can be defended against using either Control or Perception rolls can also be resisted using willpower. Force-users get to choose which roll they'll use, usually opting for whichever ability or skill is higher.

The next time a Jedi says, "These aren't the droids you're looking for," the target can look at him, make a willpower roll, and say, "Oh, yes they are. Out of the landspeeder, and put your hands where I can see them!" ❑

Thanks to Lester Smith (and alter-ego Elesor Fahjay) for his insights into the mysteries of the Jedi, and to Dale Donovan (and Feyla) for points 4 and 5.

Weasel Games

Kick Me—I'm a Weasel Gamer

by Lester Smith

The real trouble with writing a column about weasel games, I'm quickly discovering, is that, as Jeff Grubb said to me recently, it is like painting a galactic "Kick Me" sign on myself. Nowadays, when I sit down to play a board game with friends, they are bound to make some comment like "watch out for Mister Weasel," or "Remember, he's a professional at weaseling." That makes it especially difficult to apply the tactics covered in this month's column. (But at least I can get the satisfaction of complaining about it in print.)

Know When To Whine

One of the greatest skills of a weasel game aficionado is the ability to "poor mouth" when things are going badly. This can be especially effective at the beginning of a game, because it identifies you as a "non-threat" to the other players early on. And if you are fortunate, they will neglect to notice as you grow to be a threat (see "Know When to Lie Low," below).

Consider the *Nuclear War* card game, for instance. In this game, players use diplomacy and disaster cards during cold war, and missiles (or bombers) and warheads during hot times, to deplete one another's population. Population is dealt from a separate deck at the beginning of play, and the cards range in size from a paltry 1 million people to 25 million in size. Naturally, a person with a couple of 25 million cards in his hand is in much better shape than someone whose biggest card is only 5 million, for example, because losses—whether during cold war or nuclear conflagration—are in terms of numbers of people rather than numbers of cards. So if you find yourself at the beginning of the game with nothing but small population cards, whine about it. Let everyone else know you are no threat, and they will devote their energies to whittling one another down to size before fighting you. And in the meantime, you can slowly, subtly build up your own population.

Whining is especially useful in games when your bad luck is readily visible. When you keep rolling poorly on the dice, for instance, everyone can clearly see that you are being honest with your complaints.

But you owe it to yourself to make sure that they notice that bad luck, feel sorry for you, and turn their attentions to someone else.

That brings up the one trouble with whining: It draws attention to you, making it difficult for you to recover safely from your bad luck.

So after whining to establish that you are not a threat, it's time to draw attention to someone else, which brings us to our next point.

Know When To Holler

While whining makes you seem less a threat to others, it really only works well in conjunction with hollering in the direction of someone else. Look around the table, decide who is in the best position, and then point that person out to all the other players. Crying "We have to stop him!" while pointing a finger at the player in the lead, accomplishes two things. First, it turns all eyes away from you. Second, it puts the heat on your greatest rival, getting the other players to do your work for you.

In a lunch-time session of the *Worlds of Boris Vallejo* game at work not too long ago, for example, Dori Watry used this tactic to advantage. In this surprisingly good game, players generate a random map of worlds by taking turns laying out various pieces of Vallejo art, then compete to see who can capture the most realms, using cards depicting characters from those illustrations. Near the end of the session, Dori was in second place to Bruce Nesmith, and because of the way the board was laid out, he was forced to attack one of her realms if he wanted to expand.

Naturally, she hollered to call everyone else's attention to his first-place ranking, and of course, we all felt constrained to ally with her in the battle, despite the fact that it would deplete our own resources while preserving hers.

(Of course, this is also the tactic people are using when they point to me across a table and say, "There's the guy to watch. He's a published weasel." By drawing attention to me, they displace it from themselves. Hint. Hint.)

The only problem with hollering and pointing is that it still risks drawing attention to you. Clever opponents will immediately ask themselves what you have to hide. So whenever possible, use the following tactic. It is the best of the three.

Know When To Lie Low

The best of all possible worlds is when everyone else is so busy fighting things out that they don't even notice you.

This is a classic strategy in the *Cosmic Encounters* game, for instance. In that game, players take the roles of various alien races, each with its own solar system of five planets, and they seek to establish bases on other player's planets.

The first person to gain six bases outside of his home system wins the game.

This can be accomplished by straightforward warfare: Player each get up to two chances to attack another world during their turns. But allying with an attacker also gains a player a base, if the attacker wins the battle.

And given how spread-out the game board is (it consists of numberous large hexagonal pieces laid edge-to-edge), and how many tokens there are on it (each player begins with 20), it is easy to lose track of how many bases a particular person has.

This is especially true considering that game play itself is a bit wild and wacky, given that each alien race has a unique special power which allows its player to "cheat" the rules in one way or another.

On occasion, then, a player seeking a fifth base invites allies to join his attack, only to discover, once the battle is over and the dust has cleared, that one of the allies has thereby gained his sixth base and won the game.

There are few things in life more humiliating.

Into The Dark

Master Of . . . The Dramatic Pause

by James Lowder

The cast of the original *Star Trek* series was cursed by the show's phenomenal success. Will Leonard Nimoy ever shake those pointed ears? Will James Doohan ever be offered a new role that doesn't require a Scottish accent? William Shatner, like the rest of the crew of the Starship Enterprise, has been hobbled by his three-year jaunt through television space. Oh, he's had success with such uninspired TV fare as *Rescue 911*. But James T. Kirk always looms nearby, his increasingly paunchy shadow obscuring Shatner's work, both pre- and post-Trek. His appearance on *Saturday Night Live* and the fateful "Get a life!" line during the Trek convention sketch created a much greater stir than any of his TrekWo—er, that is TekWorld books.

Not that Shatner's choice of film projects—or the projects' choice of him—has been that stellar anyway. For every film like *Judgment at Nuremburg*, there are 10 episodes of "T. J. Hooker" or a stinker like *Visiting Hours*. And then there's the matter of his range as an actor. Leonard Nimoy and George Takei could rail with full justification against their typecasting, for they've proven their versatility in a number of interesting projects. But Shatner? Well, we can let his work in this month's movies argue for (or against) him.

You can't get any better ★★★★★
Entertaining and enjoyable ★★★★
There are worse films ★★★
Wait for cable ★★
A waste of good tape ★

The Devil's Rain

1975, 85 Minutes
United
Director: Robert Fuest
Cast: Ernest Borgnine, Eddie Albert, William Shatner, Tom Skerritt
★★

The Devil's Rain is one of a horde of 70s occult horror films preoccupied with Satan-worship and not-so-secret covens of witches and warlocks and ill-mannered folk in black robes waiting to topple society. As such, it shares many elements with a lot of other 70s occult thrillers—things like trippy music that sounds like it was composed by a listless ocelot running up and down a Moog synthesizer's keyboard, and a few obligatory scenes of poorly lit and very silly black masses. The fact that *The Devil's Rain* boasts a cast that includes the real high priest of the Church of Satan, Anton Szandor La Vey, doesn't change matters much; the mass scenes are still poorly lit, but perhaps a little creepier than average, since we must admit that there are people out there who actually take La Vey and his crowd seriously.

As for the rest of the film, it's an unbalanced mix of dull filler spiced only by a few interesting and well-delivered shocks. Ernest Borgnine plays Corbis, a centuries-old warlock in search of the book that holds the signatures of all those he has recruited for Hell. Standing somewhat brainlessly in his way are the Preston family, who stole the book from Corbis in Puritan New England (in the flashback, Borgnine wears a funny hat and says "thee" a lot). But the Prestons don't trouble Corbis for long. One by one they disappear, until the family parapsychologist (Tom Skerritt), his telepathic wife, and fellow scientist Dr. Richards (Eddie Albert) show up to make some sense of the plot. Dr. Preston waits to duke it out with the suddenly goat-featured Corbis just long enough to discover that his mom (Ida Lupino) and brother (William Shatner) have been turned into eyeless zombies.

The ending for *The Devil's Rain* is downbeat, which was pretty typical for occult films of the day; the heroes mess up the Satanists' plans, but they never quite squash all the little roaches. In this instance, it isn't surprising that the Prestons can't triumph, since they're universally portrayed as dolts who claim to understand black magic, but rely on guns to counter sorcery. Unsurprisingly, they're about as successful as *Call of Cthulhu* characters who thinks pistols will help them defeat, say, Azathoth in a one-on-one brawl.

I doubt this film shows up on the resumes of Skerritt, Albert, Shatner, or John Travolta (who makes his non-speaking film debut here as a tortured soul in the movie's finale). Admittedly they have little to work with, but they don't make anything of it either. Borgnine does a little better as Corbis, though he relies more on his patented wide-eyed leer more than any acting ability. Director Fuest has done better work, too, most especially on the enjoyable, campy Dr. Phibes films with Vincent Price.

Kingdom of the Spiders

1977, 94 Minutes
Dimension/United Ent.
Director: John "Bud" Cardos
Cast: William Shatner, Tiffany Bolling, Marcy Lafferty
★★★

A resort town ignores warnings about killer animals roaming their area just before the tourist season opens, and lots of folks pay the consequences. A synopsis of Jaws? Nope. It's *Kingdom of the Spiders*, one of a wave of late 70s eco-horror films and another entry in the long and venerable genealogy of insects-conquer-the-world flicks.

William Shatner plays Dr. Hanson, a good-natured veterinarian for the small town of Camp Verde, Arizona. As the town prepares for the county fair, Hanson tries to uncover the cause of a few sudden, unexplainable animal deaths. As the title suggests, it's spiders doing the dirty work here, tarantulas to be precise. Because DDT has wiped out their normal food sources, the spiders band together and form hunting colonies. It's up to Dr. Hanson and the stereotypical city-slicker lady scientist from the university labs (Tiffany Bolling) to stop them. The spiders have the upper hand—er, limb—though; they have kamikaze troops that can even bring down an airplane!

Kingdom of the Spiders is similar in plot and development to dozens of other good and bad 70s eco-horror films such as *Frogs* or *Day of the Animals* or *Killer Bees* (any of a long list of movies in

which someone has to say: "This is our home, and no damned [fill in the animal or supernatural beastie] is gonna run us out!"). The direction is sound, and Shatner acquits himself well as the overly macho vet, playing the role with the touch of humor so lacking in many of his less successful, intense characters. The surprisingly grim ending is great. It more than makes up for the overblown Muzak soundtrack and terrible country songs by Dorsey Burnette that play every time someone switches on a car radio.

Visiting Hours

1981, 105 Minutes
20th Century Fox
Director: Jean Claude Lord
Cast: Lee Grant, Michael Ironside, William Shatner
1/2

I hope everyone involved with *Visiting Hours* got paid big bucks, because it's gotta haunt their sleep that they ever worked on such a revolting flick as this.

Many slasher films are blunt morality tales. Take the *Friday the 13th* series, for example. You know that any kid who has sex, takes drugs, or generally breaks society's norms during the course of the film will get an axe in the head before the final credits roll. Conversely, the "nice girl" will probably survive the gore fest—psychologically damaged, but still attached to most of her vital organs. There are major exceptions to this, of course, and a whole different group of films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* have made strong comments about violence by pointing out that victimization is random.

And then there are twisted flicks like *Visiting Hours*, which pretends to expound a message about violence, but simply revels in showing mayhem and murder in its most base form. The appeal of this sort of film eludes me. For nearly two hours, sicko Michael Ironside stalks a hospital in search of television editorialist Deborah Ballin (Lee Grant). Ironside objects to Ballin's stand on women's rights, especially as it relates to women defending themselves against domestic violence. His dad was scalded by his mom for roughing her up, you see, and he obviously never got over it. So he kills anyone who gets in his way, during scenes amazingly devoid of tension or shock.

All the standard slasher film trappings are here—the preponderance of point-of-view shots, the fake scares as cats leap out of cupboards, the characters who are given everything but the killer's wallet but still can't figure out who he is. In fact, if logic were applied to the plot, the film would be over in about 10 minutes. Ballin and her blank-eyed producer pal from the television station (Shatner, in a dreary performance) figure out that she is first attacked for one particular editorial she taped. But since she was attacked before the tape aired, the attacker obviously had to work at the TV station and have access to the tape or been on the set while the editorial was being shot.

If you like the revolting "documentary" carnage series, *Faces of Death*, you might get a cheap thrill out of watching people get stabbed in *Visiting Hours*. I wouldn't admit it in front of a psychologist, though.

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan

1982, 113 Minutes
Paramount
Director: Nicholas Meyer
Cast: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, Ricardo Montalban
★★★★

There's a useful rule-of-thumb you can use when trying to remember which of the Star Trek films are worth watching: the even-numbered entries are good, the odd are awful.

Much of the credit for the good Star Trek flicks can be given to director-screenwriter Nicholas Meyer, who directed the second and sixth in the series, and served as a screenwriter on the fourth. Meyer has an obvious feel for Star Trek's basic appeal—the high-spirited adventure, the camaraderie, and the intelligent and gentle humor that characterized the best of the television show. All these things are integral parts of the films in which he was involved (and lacking in those from which he was absent).

From its clever opening, in which Vulcan cadet Saavik (Kirstie Alley) faces the dreaded Kobayashi Maru simulation, to the successfully melodramatic sacrifice of Spock to save the Enterprise from certain destruction, *Star Trek II* manages to be both an exciting adventure film and a strong character study of Admiral James T. Kirk. The story, of course, follows up upon the famous "Space Seed" episode of the television series, and has the villainous super-genius Khan (Ricardo Montalban) returning to revenge himself upon Kirk. Montalban does a great job with a role that could easily have been overplayed, even when spouting references to Milton and *Moby Dick*.

There's also some welcome depth to Kirk's part here, as he struggles with his age and faces the death of someone close for the very first time. Shatner handles this material well, especially the light touches and the unobtrusive banter with his shipmates.

Sadly, *Star Trek III* undoes almost all the character development begun on Kirk's character here (by bringing back Spock, killing off Kirk's son, and so on). For a time, most would SF fans would have cited the third as the worst Star Trek film. Then William Shatner got the chance to direct one himself. . . .

Star Trek V: The Final Frontier

1989, 107 Minutes
Paramount
Director: William Shatner
Cast: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, Laurence Luckinbill
★1/2

Not only is *Star Trek V* the worst Star Trek film to date, it's also a really stupid story in its own right. Someone hijacks the Enterprise and goes off to find God? And that someone turns out to be Spock's half-brother, Sybok (Laurence Luckinbill)? And this guy can heal people's secret pain by pointing out to them just what that pain is (as if most people don't know what thing from their past haunts them)?

After a painfully misfired opening, in which the subtle, good-natured humor of the fourth film is supplanted by such blunt and horribly lame sequences as Kirk, McCoy, and Spock trying to sing campfire songs, the Enterprise crew is thrown together once more and dragged across the universe toward the Great Barrier, past which supposedly lies Eden and the Big Boss who created it. Conveniences abound—such as the ship's transporters being off-line during a rescue mission—and the story plods along to a forgettable finale. They don't find God. Neither do they explain what they did find, what the Great Barrier is, or how the thing led Sybok there from across the galaxy. But they do give us more campfire songs before the credits. ❑

The Living Galaxy

Freedom's Last Gleaming: A New View of Space Colonies in SF

by Roger Moore

It was a short article, only a page long. I was looking up material for one of these columns when it caught my eye on page 36 in the November 1991 issue of *Ad Astra*, a space-sciences magazine. I recognized the author, William F. Wu, as a science-fiction writer, which sparked my curiosity. I sat down to read Mr. Wu's "Taking Liberties in Space," and I was amazed at its conclusions—all of which were perfectly logical.

The article examined possible changes in politics and civil rights in space colonies of the future. It concluded that colonists might not have the same freedoms and rights that we in the Western world enjoy. Authoritarian, conservative governments that we would consider repressive and stifling might be the rule, not the exception, in space.

How is this possible? And what does this have to do with a science-fiction campaign? Let's look at the second question first.

The National Personality

Nations, like people, have their own personalities. A good game master can take a particular nation's laws, governmental goals, public attitudes and beliefs, and relationships with other nations, and present them quite subtly while role-playing nonplayer characters who are citizens of that state. The end effect is that the players build up a picture of a larger, invisible entity that has a direct effect on their characters' lives or adventures. (See this column in POLYHEDRON® Newszine issue #85 for details.)

For instance, the PCs dock their spacecraft at a colony based inside a hollowed-out asteroid, a factory world whose people mine and process metallic ores found in other small asteroids. The PCs are questioned twice upon their arrival by heavily armed security police who keep asking about the PCs' ties with another asteroid-mining colony in the same system. The PCs are also given three separate medical examinations and are sprayed and inoculated against various diseases and parasites. The PCs must wear identification tags and locator belts at all times aboard the colony, facing severe penalties if they remove either; their movements through the colony are greatly restricted by government decree. Finally, no one except security police or high-level executives will speak with them or even look them in the eyes while they conduct business. Interestingly, no one speaks to or stares at the security police, either.

What impression of this world do you think the players are going to have? How will this atmosphere affect their work or any adventures they have there? You can see how the GM has used the NPCs of this world to communicate a consistent picture of their society to the players, without once using the words "totalitarian police state."

If you tell the players what the game situation is, as if reciting facts from a textbook, they won't gain the personal feeling for it that they would if you play out the details, the day-to-day world that their characters experience firsthand. If the GM says, "The people on this space colony seem very prejudiced against the nonhumans in your crew," it means little. If the GM has people stare rudely at the nonhumans, with some NPCs calling them vile names and demanding that they leave or be killed, that means something. It has impact, and the players won't forget it.

Space colonies will function in all ways as social bodies, and they will surely develop personalities of their own.

In science-fiction games, the GM should take pains to generate the social aspects of the worlds that the PCs visit, to bring out the "reality" of the game universe. It will have a dramatic effect on every aspect of role-playing in the campaign.

Given that the personality of a science-fiction-game society is important, we turn to look at specific characteristics of a space colony's society and government—the good, the bad, and the downright ugly.

Space: The Hostile Frontier

One of the most basic social rules—if not THE most basic rule—of any colony anywhere is this: Do not threaten the welfare of the colony. The survival of the colony comes before everything else; otherwise, there would be no colony. Leaders and citizens alike cannot afford to behave irresponsibly. No one, if he has any sense about him, will tolerate destructive behavior.

This is not to say that threatening or destructive behavior won't occur. A powerful bully or tyrant can get away with quite a lot if he has enough personal security and control over people's lives.

And citizens can bring about their own complete ruin within a very short time if they ignore the priority to keep themselves and their society alive in favor of other things. You need only visit Somalia, Cambodia, Rwanda, or the former Yugoslavia on present-day Earth to learn that.

However, those examples are from Earth, an "open-air" planet that allows many war or disaster refugees a chance to survive by living off the land, however miserably, without any special equipment or expense. Hostile worlds and airless space, on the other hand, forgive nothing.

If someone forgets to fix the life-support system, everyone dies. If someone throws a hand grenade into the power plant and the electricity shuts off, everyone dies. If workers go on strike and refuse to turn on the water supply, everyone dies. Space has no tolerance for anyone who fails to put survival first.

Many of the space bases and colonies in the future are likely to be established on worlds and in places that are extremely hostile to life as we know it. Deep space and the Moon have no air, water, or native life. Mars has very little

air (none of it breathable) and no native life that we know of, but at least it has water, in the form of ice. Venus—well, Venus is hell, and you can look up the details.

Humans would come to live in such environments only for very good reasons, given that sudden death will often be only a mistake away. People might go to the asteroids to mine them, land on Mars to study it and answer questions about life on other worlds, or build space stations around Earth to study our own world. Science-fiction role-playing games usually assume that humans and aliens will spread out all over the galaxy, colonizing dangerous worlds left and right.

And so we might. But the law of survival, as William Wu points out, could mean extensive changes in social order.

For example, he says that the freedom of assembly and protest could be revoked or restricted by a space-colony government if the disruption of daily routine would threaten the colony's survival. On Earth today, government and law-enforcement officials decide if the manner in which a public protest is made is harmful to the community. A trucking company might go on strike for weeks, but if the company is responsible for hauling much-needed supplies of food, arms, and medicine during wartime, the company's right to strike might be superseded by the nation's need to win the war and survive intact.

Mr. Wu points out that certain other rights we have, such as the right to bear arms or the right to a trial and humane treatment if accused of a crime, could come into question, too.

Can you support the right to carry handguns on a space station where a shattered window means explosive decompression and death? (Think of the movie *Outland* at this point.) Can you guarantee due process for an accused murderer on a space colony where every breath of air and every bit of food is more precious than gold? What can be done with a convicted and dangerous criminal when no prison exists within millions of miles of the colony where he is kept? The implications are enormous.

But wait—there's more! Megacorporations (as well as regular corporations and private organizations) have been a staple of science-fiction role-playing games for years. Picture, then, a colony created and run by a space-going corporation. What laws will that colony have—those of the company's home government, those of the company alone, or both? In corporations, Mr. Wu says, power flows down the pyramid from above; in a democracy, it flows up from the people. The need for efficiency and security might stifle popular dissent, and the normal procedure of having higher-ups select company officers is exactly the opposite of democratic selection. Is this good, bad, or neither? Will workers share in corporate power, willingly forgo their civil rights but receive other benefits, or function as unwilling slaves?

In some respects, the situation is like that of an island nation on Earth, where the population is largely contained by geographic features as well as any economic or political factors. Perhaps the worst social disaster to befall an island nation is the appearance of a dictatorship supported by a strong military. Political dissent is suppressed, and executions for disobedience might be common. (Haiti, Cuba, and similar places come to mind, as does Larry Niven's world of Mount Lookitthat, from his novel, *A Gift from Earth*.)

If a group arose on a space colony and seized control of the life-support system, it could call the shots and create a brutal environment that might deteriorate over time into chaos and ruin.

A GM designing an isolated space colony as part of an adventure should spend some time thinking about these factors and how they will affect the PCs and the adventure itself. Certainly, not all space colonies would be so repressive and hostile.

But it is likely that many such colonies will share certain characteristics, and the players will over time come to recognize them and learn to deal with them. The PCs will eventually not insist on bringing their firearms into an orbital station, and they might plan their stops more carefully to avoid the more dangerous and dictatorial colonies, which might attempt to take over their spacecraft for undefined purposes. (If a country grants no rights to its citizens, it won't grant any rights to anyone else, either.)

One People, One Mind

Okay, so there's an isolated space colony in the campaign. What can you say about its people and how they think and react? We'll do some extrapolation of our own and look at the darker side of life in space.

Given that open dissent is not likely to be encouraged in a colony, how will this affect the population selection? In other words, if you were creating a space colony, how would you select people who wanted to join it?

Today, psychological testing is commonly given to people who will be living in small, enclosed, high-stress environments. The Russians have great experience in testing crews for their long-duration Soyuz and Mir space missions, some of which have lasted over a year.

Russians learned much about small-group psychology while running their Antarctic research stations, and they now excel at putting together crews who work together quickly, efficiently, and in harmony. Despite the enormous technological troubles that have plagued their space missions, their crews are top-notch in courage and teamwork.

Psychological testing is common in America, too, and some corporations administer personality tests to find out which employee is best suited for which job. Further, the armed forces of many nations administer detailed psychiatric tests to servicemembers who volunteer to perform stressful, dangerous missions. I once gave tests to sniper-school candidates, for instance, and all astronauts and cosmonauts are tested thoroughly.

You can imagine, then, how choosy a space-colony government would be in selecting its population. Psychiatric tests would weed out sociopaths, neurotics, latent psychotics, and personality disorders. (Who wants a guy around who's going to argue with you all day?) Medical tests would catch those with drug problems, infectious diseases, convulsive disorders, and other potential health risks such as heart disease. Medical tests could possibly even rule out "minor" troubles such as myopia on the grounds that someone might not be able to function well if he can't find his glasses, if his glasses get dirty, if they won't fit inside a helmet, if they get broken, etc.

If a colony is meant to be around for a long time, decades or longer, then the government might select people based on genetic factors, to prevent bad side effects from inbreeding or to prevent certain genetic disorders from being passed on.

At the extreme, you can imagine colonial applicants being rejected for being albino, having an extra toe, being

color-blind, or having a grandfather who was treated for an epileptic seizure.

You might think that a government might select people who have different physical looks, so that inbreeding would not be a problem. However, even today, we can freeze and store reproductive cells; you don't need different people to produce different children.

A colony made up of physically different people might function extremely well if the colonists placed the ability to speak the same language and having respect for family elders far above physical differences such as skin color or size.

Even so, you can see that an isolated colony will become very insular, and it might even reject receiving certain types of communications (news reports, entertainment shows, etc.) broadcast by other colonies. Colonial identity will become extremely strong, and bonds between colonists who support the status quo will be strong as well.

If the colony is out of touch with the rest of civilization for long periods of time, you could expect it to develop its own unique language dialect, social codes and customs (mores), and behaviors. Their slang, technical terms, and common speech will all drift from their roots. Read Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* for an example of language drift (Russian mixed with English), and read George Orwell's *1984* for an example of how an artificial language might be developed as a form of mind control by a tyrannical government. Isolated people will likely look increasingly peculiar to outsiders as time goes on.

People accustomed to living in close quarters might avoid eye contact unless speaking to someone, prefer small interpersonal spaces when talking to another, and have exaggerated standards of politeness and formality. Their gestures will not take up much space. They might also develop agoraphobia but be able to live in spaces that others would think of as barely larger than coffins.

Internal security would be a high priority if the colony manufactures many valuable small parts and must avoid smuggling. In such cases, the colonists might be regularly spied upon by surveillance equipment. They might have little sense of privacy or personal space, yet strive to keep certain parts of their lives as closely guarded secrets. Outsiders would find these people impossible to get to know.

What else might characterize a colonist from an isolated space group? He might be pliant, yes, but tough and dedicated to his job. Accustomed to working for hours at a stretch in hostile and uncomfortable environments, he might be a workaholic, his condition encouraged by the government.

Exhaustion and stress-related problems (such as "nervous breakdowns" and drug abuse) could be epidemic. *Karoshi* (Japanese for "death by overwork") might exist in severe cases. Though conservative in many ways, the colonist would be no-nonsense, practical, and used to solving problems as a way of life. If life is hard, he would face trouble with courage and stoicism, counting on the future to bring his rewards.

A creature of habit and custom, he might also allow for some personal time to pursue unusual solo hobbies and recreations, such as meditation, to escape groups for a time. He is likely to be religious in a conservative sense; if nature is trying hard to kill you, you need all the divine help you can get, and you don't joke around with it.

Some colonists might develop social quirks. One might turn out to be a practical joker, doing things to relieve the stress in the colony and add low-level unpredictability to the works. Another might become an expert on an obscure subject, an eccentric who can discuss any aspect of 15th-century medieval French poetry or the folk music of late 21st-century South Africa.

Others might develop compulsions or obsessions because of the stress from dealing with the hostile environment, such as hiding religious items in their spacesuits or saving "lucky" coins.

A barter economy based on trading working hours and consumables might develop. ("I'll give you that extra piece of cake if you cover my next two hours on watch for me.") Awareness of the need to avoid waste and recycle materials will reach levels we would never normally dream of, and no one might imagine throwing anything away until it is totally useless. A colonist might develop a habit of writing on a sheet of paper until it is totally covered with markings.

As for crime . . . well, it would be best not to be a criminal on a space colony. Swift executions might be ordered for those who commit serious crimes, with lesser offenses being punished by enforced labor without pay, or a loss of possessions or wealth. A colony's idea of what constitutes a serious crime could vary wildly. In Robert Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, execution for disrespecting a woman was so common among lunar colonists as not to merit public attention. Pickpocketing was not even a crime in Larry Niven's *Known Space* series, but other offenses such as jaywalking might produce the death penalty.

Insanity might also lead to "involuntary euthanasia" for the victim on a remote space colony, if the colony had no facilities for curing the victim, getting the victim to medical help quickly, or holding the victim in cryogenic stasis. Genetic testing and therapy might be widely practiced to avoid bringing children with any sort of undesirable traits into the limited world of the colony.

Travel within a space colony might also be greatly restricted. Access to the power supply, life-support systems, and command areas might be limited to a few, the ban enforced by severe punishments. Leaving the colony might also be prevented by dictatorial governments, though some might be happy to get rid of troublemakers without killing them. (Again, Cuba comes to mind in view of the boatlift bringing Cuba's "undesirables" to America in the early 1980s.)

The PCs Arrive, and . . .

So, what does all this have to do with the PCs? Quite a lot. If the PCs tend to raise hell wherever they go, they might find it wise to avoid certain space colonies. Even if they tend to be law-abiding, they would do well to carefully research each of their ports of call as they travel across the universe on their adventures. The mere accusation of a crime might have terrible consequences on an isolated space colony. Rescuing the PC prisoners or proving their innocence could involve a major adventure. Keep in mind, too, that the colonists are very unlikely to be cowards; their military might be efficient and merciless, if not brutal, and the citizens swift to react if their home or lives are threatened in any way.

Assuming the characters are of a more honest sort and have some degree of diplomacy, they might find it profitable to making trading runs to remote space colonies, supplying them with low-cost goods the colonies need.

Visiting each colony would indeed be an adventure in itself. ❑